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THE QUEEN'S REVENGE

BY

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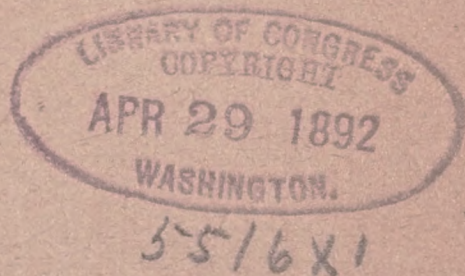
THE QUEEN'S REVENGE.

A NOVEL.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.,

Author of "The Gunmaker of Moscow," "Ivan the Serf," Etc.

40
J. de la Roche



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THE QUEEN'S REVENGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE KNIGHT OF LEON.

THE fifteenth century had dawned upon Spain, and the Christians had by degrees gained possession of all the Spanish Peninsula save Granada; but Granada still gave a home and a kingdom to the Moor, and here the Moslem held his sceptre against the mighty powers that were growing in the north. There were scenes of festivity in Grenada, and magnificent tournaments, too, were held there; nor was the participation in these confined to the Moors, for Christian knights from Spain and France and Germany frequently came and joined in the lists. The Moor was wary, however, and his darkly flashing eye slept not upon his Christian visitors.

It was a bright morning in early summer. The gardens, the fields and the forests were clothed in their gayest vestments, and the birds sent aloft the notes of their thanksgiving in sweetly-sounding, musical pæans. Near the river Gaudix, and upon its northern bank, appeared two horsemen; their beasts were standing still, and the riders were gazing upon a stream that flowed before them. Back of them, toward the north, was a deep forest, from which they had just emerged, while ahead, to the southward, some twelve miles distant, a few glittering spires could be seen, and near these loomed up the bright towers of the Alham-

bra. Further on, the eye rested upon the snow-clad summits of the heaven-reaching Alpujarras, with the Sierre Nevada, towering aloft with its crown of regal white, the monarch of Mountain Spain.

The first of the horsemen was a young man attired in a gorgeous suit of mail. The subtle links were of the brightest steel, and they were wrought with the most exquisite skill and workmanship. Over this suit of full mail the man wore a frock of crimson silk, upon the breast of which was wrought in golden threads the cross of Leon. Upon his head he wore a steel cap, formed of nicely adjusted plates, slightly conical in its form, and from the top of which waved a triple plume of white ostrich feathers. If the cross upon the knight's breast did not at once betray the kingdom from whence he came, the rich dress of the black steed that bore him would have cleared the matter at once. Over the plates of steel that the horse wore upon his breast, and covering the back and sides of the animal, was a drapery of crimson silk, upon which was wrought in various colors of silver and gold the cross and the lion—the insignia of Christian Leon.

The knight was not over six-and-twenty years of age, being tall and well-formed, with a fullness of limb and muscle that spoke of much strength and manly exercise. His hair was worn in the usual manner of the times, long and flowing, the curls of which escaped freely from beneath the steel cap. His features were noble in their moulding, and possessed a degree of beauty that can be made up only from the promptings of a generous soul and a noble and brave heart.

The knight's companion was an odd-looking being, dressed in the common garb of an humble esquire, with leggings of half-armor, and wearing a stout breast-plate. He wore upon his head a steel skull-cap, and the face that

looked out from beneath the small vizor was beaming with good nature and shrewd cunning. He was some years older than his master, and though not so tall by several inches, he yet possessed a quantity of muscle that showed itself in big masses about his breast and limbs, and those who had come once within his clutches never afterward doubted that Pedro Bambino's muscle was as good in quality as in quantity. The horse he rode was of an iron gray color, and full as stout as his master's.

"Pedro," said the knight, as he reined his horse further back from the edge of the river, "there must be a bridge somewhere about here."

"In truth there is," returned the esquire, "or at least there used to be one, for I crossed it myself not a dozen years ago; but I think it is further up the stream."

"Then up the stream we'll go," said the knight, as he turned his horse's head in that direction.

Accordingly both riders started off, and at the end of half an hour they came to the place where a bridge was thrown across the river. They passed over to the other side, and there they found themselves in a broad road that led to the city of Granada.

"We are in the right way now," said Pedro Bambino.

"Yes," returned the knight.

"But what would all this gain us if they would not let us into the city?" suggested the esquire.

"There'll be no trouble about that, Pedro. A peaceable Christian knight will not be refused admittance within the city."

"Nor a peaceful Christian esquire," added Pedro.

"No," said the knight, with a smile.

"Then there can't be much danger," continued Pedro, as he spurred up his horse.

For some time the two rode on in silence. Even the

mind of the esquire seemed deeply interested in the gorgeous scenery that opened upon the view, and more than once he allowed his horse to stop, as he became lost in a sort of rapt wonder at the scenes that lay ahead. The snow-capped Alpujarras riveted most of his attention, and it was not until the taller forest trees began to gather over his head and shut out the mountains, that he gave any due attention to his beast.

“What does that mean?” uttered Pedro, as they entered a ravine of palms and gall-nuts.

“What?” returned the knight, inquisitively.

“My horse smells something. See him toss that dainty head and open those nostrils. There—hear that snort.”

Both men cast their eyes about them, and it was not long before the object that had awakened the instinct of the brute was discovered. Upon the side of the road, and at the foot of a huge rock, sat a man who seemed by his countenance to be in considerable pain. He seemed an old man, for his hair and beard were gray, and he was dressed in the garb of a man in the lower ranks of life. The Christians pulled in their steeds as they came abreast of where the man sat, and the knight bent over to get a fair view of him.

“Sir knight,” said the man, half raising himself to his feet, “do you go to the city?”

“Yes.”

“Then, in the name of the God you worship, I ask you to carry me.”

“San Jago, good man,” quickly responded Pedro—for he knew that if the man was carried, his horse would have to bear the burden—“our horses are wayworn now. We’ve ridden half the night, and ’twould be——”

“Stop, Pedro,” interrupted the knight; and then turn-

ing toward the Moor, he continued, "Are you unable to walk?"

"I am, most truly, sir knight. I had climbed upon the top of this rock, and fell. My right ankle is badly sprained, and I fear I am otherwise injured."

"What could you want up there?" asked Pedro, casting his eyes up to where the rock towered above his head.

"I wanted to see the rising sun," returned the Moor.

"You'd better have been in your bed than running after the sun, I should say."

There was a spark of indignation flashing in the dark eye of the Moor, but it quickly changed to a cast of melancholy thought, and looking sharply into Pedro's face, he said:

"My God made the sun the most glorious of all his world, and I love to look upon it. Go your way; and I will crawl to the city as best I can."

"Hold—not quite so fast," said the knight. "My good esquire has a way peculiarly his own; but as good Christians we'll not leave you here to suffer. Pedro, help the man to mount behind you. I know you would not feel easy to leave the man here."

With more alacrity than might have been expected, Pedro leaped from his horse and assisted the Moor to his feet. It was with much difficulty that the fellow moved along with Pedro's aid, and not until the knight himself alighted and gave his assistance could the Moor be lifted to the horse's back.

"Sir knight," said the lamed man, as the trio were mounted, "I do not wish to ask of you too much, but if you would hasten on to the city as fast as possible you would do me a favor for which I will be grateful."

The knight bade Pedro put spurs to his horse, and for some distance they galloped on at a good speed. At length

they came to an abrupt hill, and the beasts were allowed to walk up.

"You have come to join in the tournament to-morrow, I suppose," said the Moor, as he ran his eyes over the knight's fine figure.

"I knew not there was one," returned the Christian, with a kindling eye. "But i' faith, I shall be there if there is."

"There will be a grand display of prowess, and many a bright eye to bear it witness," said the Moor.

"By San Dominic, than I shall bear it witness too," cried Pedro, with a joyful look. "I'll bear my master's shield 'gainst the list. Ha, Pedro, we'll see."

As the esquire said this he patted his horse emphatically upon the neck, and looked proudly upon his master. The Moor, too, gazed upon the knight.

"You are from Leon," he said.

"Yes," said the knight.

"And a count, too," returned the Moor.

"Yes."

"Count of Valladolid, too," answered the Moor.

"Your eyes are sharp," said the knight, with a smile.

"Sharp enough to know the meaning of your triple plume," said the Moor.

"So, so. Well, I am Charles, Count of Valladolid, and knight royal of Leon."

"And what is Count Charles of Valladolid doing so far south?"

"Seeing the country," returned the knight. And then with a sharp look into the face of the Moor, he continued:

"As you are the first acquaintance I have made, whom might I call you?"

"To tell the truth, good count," answered the Moslem, while a peculiar look overspread his features, "it makes lit-

tle difference what you call me. In all probability you will never see me again, and I don't believe I shall ever reward you for the kindness you are at present doing me. However, I am sometimes called Abdalla, and if that name suits you, so you may call me."

The knight gazed curiously upon the Moor, for the swarthy features were not only regular and well formed, but they possessed a degree of intelligence that was not to be overlooked. There was something in his manner, too, that was puzzling, to say the least.

"Do you belong in the city of Granda?" asked Sir Charles.

"As much there as anywhere."

"But to judge from your haste you have urgent business there now."

"Yes."

That monosyllable was pronounced in a tone so peculiar that even Pedro turned half about in his saddle and gazed into the face of the Moor.

"By San Dominic, but you are a curious man, all ways," said the esquire.

"And this is a very curious world. Have you not discovered that yet?"

"I' faith you speak the truth now," uttered Pedro; and as he spoke he turned once more to his horse's head.

They had topped the hill, and the city was open to view. The horses were put to a brisk trot, and nothing more was said until the gate was reached. The party were admitted without much questioning, and as they entered the city the people were busy at their daily callings.

"Here," said the Moor, as they reached a narrow street that turned off toward the eastern part of the city, "let me down here."

"I will see you to your destination," said the knight.

“This is near enough, sir. If you will accept my thanks for your kindness thus far, I will trouble you no further.

Pedro helped the Moor to the pavement. The poor man stood with difficulty, and the count could not fail to see that his attempts to walk were attended with the most exquisite pain: yet he assured the knight that he could make his way alone, and that he should prefer to do so.

“Charles of Valladolid,” said the Moor, as he turned toward the knight, “you say that you have come here to see the country, but if you have business, be wary in performing it.”

The knight looked wonderingly upon the Moslem; but Abdalla waited for no answer. He turned and moved slowly, painfully away.

“By San Jago, Sir Charles, what do you make of that?” uttered Pedro.

“I can’t make nothing of it,” returned the knight, in a puzzled, thoughtful mood, and without further remark he started on.

Without difficulty the count found a public house that suited him, and having seen that his horse would be well provided for, he entered the building and ordered breakfast for himself and esquire.

CHAPTER II.

THE TOURNAMENT—ZEHRA.

DURING the day the knight of Leon did little else than look about the city in company with his honest esquire. It was no unusual thing for Christians to be seen in the city, and the count and his companion attracted only passing notice from the Moors. Great preparations were going on

for the tournament that was to come off the next day. It was to be holden in a large square beyond the hill upon which stood the Alhambra, and thither the knight bent his steps toward the close of the day.

The Granadan king, Mohammed VI., gave but little attention to the manly sports that so suited the tastes of his subjects, and, in fact, he gave but little attention to anything save his own pleasure and sensual comfort, with just enough of mental and physical activity to keep his throne from falling beneath him. The present anticipated tournament had been agreed to by the king at the urgent solicitations of many of his best knights, and he had agreed not only to be present at its passage, but he was to superintend it.

When Charles of Leon returned to his hotel in the evening he had resolved to attend the tournament on the following day.

“But will it be well?” queried Pedro.

“And how can it be evil?” asked the count.

“I will tell you. You know you are counted the best lance in Leon. Now if you enter the lists to-morrow, you may come off the victor, and, by San Dominic, that wouldn’t suit these hot-blooded Moors.”

“You take it wrongly, Pedro. There are good knights in Granada, and they will not prove themselves so mean as to turn enemies against one who proved their better in the use of arms. No, no, good Pedro, don’t fear on that account, for I assure you all will be well.”

“Well, just as you please,” returned Pedro; and he spoke in a dubious manner, and shortly afterward he set about preparing his master’s armor.

The next morning was fair and bright. At an early hour the people began to flock to the spot where the tournament was to take place, and at ten o’clock the king entered the

enclosure and took his seat. The trumpets sounded a furious blast, and the jousting began. For two hours the sport continued, and Ben Hamed, the Alcalde of Granada, stood the victor. He was a subtle, powerful knight, and he swung his spear aloft and vauntingly challenged all opponents. Two more Moorish knights appeared against him; but one after the other they were vanquished, and then more proudly than ever did Ben Hamed swing his spear aloft.

Charles of Leon pushed his horse through the crowd that was collected outside of the paling, but ere he reached it he caught the sound of his own name pronounced near to his side.

“Beware! Make not an enemy of the alcalde!”

The knight turned his head and he saw Abdalla limping away through the crowd. He knew it was the same Abdalla that he had picked up by the roadside, though he looked somewhat different. His hair and beard were jet black and he looked many years younger. The voice, however, the count knew, and he knew the countenance too. The strange Moor was soon out of sight, and the count again pushed toward the paling. His soul was set upon a joust with the haughty, defying Moor, and he was not to be bent from his purpose.

“What ho, there! Here comes a Christian knight to give thee battle, Ben Hamed,” exclaimed the king, as Charles of Leon entered the lists.

The alcalde turned his flashing eyes upon the new comer, and proudly drawing back he awaited the Christian's approach.

“What seek ye here?” cried Ben Hamed.

“To give thee a friendly joust,” returned Charles; “that is, if the lists be open to me.”

"Of course they are open if you be a true knight," said the king.

"I am a true knight of Leon, and this day shall prove it, though I may go down before the lance of the alcalde; yet if I bear me at all before one whose prowess has been so well proved, you will know me for a knight."

At the first part of his speech Ben Hamed frowned, but at its close he looked upon the Christian with a half scornful expression as he jauntingly balanced his lance in his hand.

"Go take your ground," he said.

"Shall it be with lance and spear?" asked Charles.

"Yes."

The count rode back to the paling where Pedro was stationed and took his shield. From one of the marshals he received a round-headed spear, and then the trumpet sounded. Charles of Leon was habited the same as we saw him upon the road, and his appearance attracted the attention of all. His horse seemed eager for the onset, and he pranced in his instinctive pride.

Again the herald sounded the trumpet, and Charles gave his steed the rein. The Moor and the Christian met. Ben Hamed sat like a rock in his saddle, while the count was jostled, but he lost not his balance. In an instant Charles saw and understood the alcalde's subtle play. With a movement so quick that it was almost imperceptible, and one that must have required long practice for its perfection, the Moor had swung his spear across the eyes of his adversary's horse with a circular sweep before he brought it to its final pose; but the Christian determined that it should not be done again.

It was with a confident air that Ben Hamed turned his horse for the second joust, and when the trumpet sounded he set boldly forward. Again the riders met, but Ben

Hamed passed not, for the knight of Leon's lance-head struck him full in the throat and hurled him to the ground. There was a low murmur ran around among the spectators, and a careful observer would have seen that there was much satisfaction felt at the result of the last joust; but the people dared not give boisterous speech to their feelings, for the alcalde was feared.

As Ben Hamed sprang to his feet there was fierce passion in his features, and for a moment he was speechless. But soon he found his tongue, and seizing his horse's rein he turned to Charles of Leon, and throwing his shield upon the ground, he shouted:

"Down with your lance and shield! I'll have at thee now with the cimenter. You shall show your prowess to better advantage ere I have done with thee."

"The sword is not a weapon for a joust," returned Charles. "It is too dangerous for sport."

"Ha, ha! and is the Christian dog in fear?"

This was spoken by the exasperated Moor in a loud, defiant, bitter tone, and sent the rich blood coursing quickly through the Christian's veins.

"The Christian does not fear!" he returned, in a proud tone.

"Then draw your sword and throw away all else," exclaimed the alcalde, as he mounted his horse and drew his bright cimenter.

"If the king will hold me clear of the consequences I will meet you."

"Ben Hamed, you had better give over the trial and go back to the lance," said the monarch.

"No, no—the sword it shall be!" cried the alcalde.

"Then the Christian knight shall be free from all harm, save such as he meets at the hands of his antagonist. Let the signal be given."

The trumpet sounded, and Charles of Leon drew his sword ; it was a keen weapon, straight and double-edged, with the usual cross hilt. The Moor met him, and some dozen blows were exchanged without effect ; but at length Charles wounded his antagonist on the shoulder. Ben Hamed saw that he had a superior to deal with, and he determined to ride him down. To this end he drew in his reins, and at a word his horse reared, and would have struck his fore feet directly upon the Christian's body ; but Charles saw the movement, and he not only avoided it, but he took advantage of it. His own horse was well trained, and he made the noble animal perform a leap that set the Moor at fault. As Ben Hamed's horse was reared proudly upon his hind legs, the horse of the Christian sprang quickly against his haunch, and both Moor and beast went tumbling on the ground.

With a fearful oath Ben Hamed sprang to his feet, and placing one foot upon the prostrate body of his horse he struck furiously at the Christian ; but Charles of Leon soon ended the conflict, for with a blow that seemed like the lightning's leap he struck the upraised blade of the Moor's cimeter near the hilt and broke it in twain.

The shouts of the multitude could no longer be restrained, and as they broke upon the air the alcalde was utterly overcome by the rage and mortification that had seized him. His horse was so much sprained that it was with difficulty the animal could be set upon his feet, and then the beast limped away from the lists.

For fifteen minutes Charles of Leon kept the lists, and no one appeared against him.

"Shall we pronounce the Christian the victor?" at length said the king, as the repeated calls of the herald remained unanswered.

"The Christian cannot receive the scarf," cried Ben

Hamed, who had taken a place near the royal seat, where the doctor was dressing the wound upon his shoulder.

The king hesitated, and he showed by his manner that he liked not to bestow the badge upon the Christian.

“The Christian is a true knight, and knighthood should know no foreign blood,” cried an old Moslem warrior, who sat near the king.

“The Christian is the true victor,” cried a dozen voices.

“Then he shall receive the reward,” said the king. Then turning to a fair young being who sat near him, he added, “Zehra, if you deem the Christian worthy, give him the badge.”

It was a lovely girl to whom the king spoke—one who had just blushed into womanhood with all the roses of beautiful youth still clustering about her. She waved her hand to Charles of Leon, and he came near to her and knelt before her.

“Sir knight,” she said with a sweet smile, “to you I award the gift that has thus fallen to my bestowal. While it remains in your possession, forget not the duty you owe to your honorable knighthood, nor her who bestowed it.”

The scarf was of blue silk, richly wrought with threads of gold, and as Zehra spoke she threw it over the knight's shoulders. As Charles of Leon arose to his feet he gazed for a moment into the features of the fairy being.

She smiled upon him, and she blushed while she smiled.

When the young Christian turned from the spot he felt in his heart that he could never forget the fair donor of the badge he had won. Her countenance had burst upon his sight as breaks the view of the distant spring upon the thirsty traveler of the desert. He did not notice the look of Ben Hamed, nor did he see how the king was moved. He saw only the bright beams of Zehra's loveliness, and he forgot that life had its losses as well as its gains.

"By San Dominic," uttered Pedro, as he rode away from the scene of the tournament with his master, "you have made one enemy, at least."

"How so, Pedro?"

"The alcalde will never forgive you."

"Then he is not a good knight."

"You are blind, Sir Charles. Didn't you ever know of a wicked knight in Leon?"

"Yes."

"Then you may expect to find some here. San Jago! but it didn't seem very hard for the girl to decide against her father."

"*Father!* What do you mean?" uttered the knight, with a sudden start.

"Why, didn't you know that Zehra was the alcalde's daughter?"

"No."

"She is, then."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Certainly. I heard the people speaking of her before the combat had ended."

Charles of Leon rode on for some distance in silence. He seemed much moved by what he had heard, and disappointment was plainly written upon his brow. When he reached his hotel he put off his armor, and as soon as he was alone he set about looking over a number of papers that he took from his bosom, each of which bore the royal seal of Leon.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOOM.

IN one of the private apartments of the Alhambra sat Mohammed VI. Near him stood the alcalde of Granada, leaning against a casement of one of the windows, and engaged in rolling and unrolling a small piece of vellum he held in his hand. The wound upon his shoulder was not a bad one, and the effects of it troubled him but very little.

"Sire," said Ben Hamed, moving nearer to the king, "what can have led him to our city?"

"I cannot tell," returned the king. "Can you?"

"He says he came to see the country."

"Then perhaps he did."

"But I don't believe it."

"And why not?" queried the king.

"Because the Count of Valladolid is too important a personage to be absent from Leon at the present time on a mere pleasure trip," returned the alcalde.

"You owe him a grudge, Ben Hamed."

"So I owe a grudge to all the enemies of Granada."

"'Tis right you should," said Mohammed. "And, to tell you the truth, I like not the presence of that Christian knight here; but yet it would not be safe to molest him."

"If we can prove him dangerous to our government we may put him out of the way," remarked the wily alcalde.

"So we can; but how shall we prove that?"

"Leave it to me. If I can make out a charge against him you shall listen to it."

"I will, by Allah."

“Then I will watch him. And let me tell you, sire, I like not the manner in which Zehra looks upon the young knight.”

“Ha!” uttered the king, half starting from his seat. “Does your daughter look upon the Christian knight with favor?”

“So she speaks.”

“Then you had better beware for yourself, Ben Hamed; for if Zehra come not to me for an unstained wife, yours shall be the peril. You had better look to her.”

The alcalde had awakened a passion in the bosom of the king he meant not to have touched; but he apprehended no danger from it. His daughter had been promised to the king, and he was to receive her among his wives when she was twenty years of age.

“I will hold myself responsible for her fidelity,” said Ben Hamed. “Charles of Leon shall know that she is bound to you, and then if he dares to—”

“I see what you mean,” hastily cried the king. “Let him but lisp sedition to her and he shall suffer. So much for the Christian.”

Ben Hamed’s eyes sparkled with satisfaction.

“Hold a moment,” said Mohammed, as the alcalde turned toward the door. “Now that I think of it, it does seem strange that the Count of Valladolid should have come to Granada unless he had important business.”

“So it seems to me,” returned Ben Hamed.

“Can you guess at the cause of his visit?” asked the king.

“No, sire.”

The alcalde spoke in a hesitating manner, and a troubled look rested on his features. He caught the keen glance of the monarch, and he seemed uneasy.

“Ben Hamed, you are deceiving me,” said the king.

“By Allah, I am not.”

“Have you no suspicions as to the cause of the Christian knight's visit here?”

“No, sire.”

“Beware, now.”

“Indeed I speak the truth.”

“Then why looked you so troubled just now?”

A moment the alcalde was silent; but a happy thought came to his aid.

“When I spoke I was thinking of his conquering me in the lists. Was not that enough to move me?”

“Perhaps it was,” returned Mohammed, still eyeing his officer with a suspicious look.

“And I was thinking, too, of what a dangerous enemy he might prove were his aims turned against our interests.”

This touched the monarch where Ben Hamed aimed.

“Watch him! watch him!” he exclaimed. “Let there be but proof enough and his rank shall not save him.”

“I will watch him, sire, and you shall be advised of all his movements.”

When Ben Hamed left the royal presence he was followed by eyes that were as keen as his own. Mohammed VI. was a jealous man, and his suspicions were easily aroused. Whether he suspected the alcalde of duplicity or not, none knew save himself; but that the Christian knight had vanquished his own warriors was enough to awaken his animosity, and the hints of Ben Hamed had not been without their effect.

“I think,” said the monarch to himself, after he was alone, “that Ben Hamed knows more of this Christian knight than he chooses to tell. At all events, I'll watch them both. Zehra is mine. Of the alcalde I want but

her, and her I will have. By Allah, but the girl is beautiful, and I think I might love her."

When the alcalde left the Alhambra he sought his own dwelling, and when he was seated in his private room he sent for his daughter. Zehra entered his presence with a meek step, and remained standing before her father.

"Zehra," said Ben Hamed, "you only want three short months to make up your twentieth year."

"The fair girl shuddered, but she spoke not in reply.

"You will then be the wife of our king," continued the alcalde, eyeing his daughter sharply.

"A *wife*!" uttered Zehra.

"Yes."

"I can never love Mohammed," said the fair girl.

"If Mohammed loves you, that is enough."

"But Mohammed cannot love me as I would be loved. He cannot feel that high emotion of soul which constitutes the true love of a husband. He can only love as the sensualist loves. He can admire beauty while it lasts; but he has no love for the being after the beauty has gone."

For some moments Ben Hamed looked silently upon his child.

"You have promised to be the king's," he said, at length.

"No, father. You once spoke with me about it, and then I told you that I had no power to oppose you."

"And of course you cannot oppose me now. This talk about love is all nonsense. You should feel happy and proud to think that you are looked upon with favor by the king."

"And do you mean that I am really to be given to Mohammed?" she cried.

"I mean that you will be his wife."

"Then you will doom me to everlasting misery."

"No, no, my child. If you are miserable it will be you who will make yourself so. I mean that you shall be happy. I wish you to remember that you are to be the king's wife."

"Father," said the poor girl, with a powerful effort to maintain her composure, "it cannot be that you will make me miserable."

"You know what I have said. My sacred promise has been given to Mohammed, and I am held responsible on my peril."

"Then would that kind Heaven might tear out my heart and place a stone there in its stead. O! I had not thought that I was to be sacrificed to the selfish passion of Mohammed against my will."

"We have spoken enough, Zehra," sternly said the alcalde. "I would only put you on your guard, for the king will not brook disappointment."

"On my guard against what?" asked the girl, looking up through her gathering tears.

"Against doing anything to break your relationship to the king."

Zehra turned away and left her father's presence. When she was alone her heart sent forth its bitter grief unchecked.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KNIGHT'S PLIGHTED FAITH.

A WEEK had passed away since the day of the tournament. Charles of Leon had been the observed of all observers; for nearly every one in Granada had recognized him as the knight who gained the victory in the lists. The

universal attention he arrested prevented him from noticing those who were dogging his steps as spies upon his actions ; but such they were for the alcalde had taken care that the Christian knight should not escape his espionage.

It was evening—late in the evening—and Charles of Leon stood by an open window and looked out upon the city. He had dismissed his esquire, and the latter was already snoring in an adjoining apartment. The full moon rose high in the heavens, and, save a few fleecy clouds that hung like masses of light down here and there in the azure vault, all was clear and bright. The air was balmy and inviting, and the young Christian resolved to walk forth and enjoy it.

A light Moorish turban hung in the apartment, and this the knight placed upon his head. A Moorish mantle, too, he threw over his shoulders, for he wished to escape impertinent observation. He passed down to the hall with a light tread, so that he might not awaken Pedro Bambino, and as he gained the street he paused for a moment to consider upon the direction he should take. The loud murmuring of the rapid Darro fell upon his ear, and he resolved to seek the river.

Several of the city guard were in the long street that led toward the Alhambra, but none of them intercepted the knight as he walked slowly along. At length he reached the bend of the river. The swift waters were rushing on to join the larger Zenil, and moving along to where a grove of olives threw out their green branches, Charles sat down upon the greensward and gazed thoughtfully upon the stream.

In the midst of his reverie the young count was aroused by a sound near him as if a light foot had fallen upon the sward. He arose to his feet, but he saw nothing save the olives that grew about him. He would have moved back

toward the city again, but he hesitated, as he thought he heard the sound again. This time he was more confident, and ere long he saw an object beyond the grove that seemed gliding toward the river. Charles took a few steps nearer to the edge of the copse, and he could see that it was a female who had attracted his attention. She was moving slowly along, and occasionally she would stop and gaze about her. She was dressed in a white robe, and the light of the moon enabled Charles to see her form distinctly. Ere long she gained the bank of the river, and, after looking about her a moment, she sank down upon her knees and clasped her hands towards heaven.

Charles of Leon moved nearer to the spot. Stealthily he glided on, and he heard the words that fell from her lips. It was a prayer she uttered, in half-broken sentences, and though a sort of calmness pervaded her speech, yet the breath of anguish was plainly distinguishable.

“Great Allah protect me, and forgive me for this, the last act of my life!” uttered the female, and then she let her hands fall upon her bosom as she moved nearer to the river.

Charles of Leon let a suppressed cry, and sprang quickly forward. He seized the unfortunate being as she was about to leap into the rapid stream, and drew her back from the river's bank. A quick cry escaped her lips as she felt the hand upon her arm, and instinctively she turned to see who it was that held her. The bright rays of the moon fell full upon her face, and the Christian knight stared with a strange emotion of astonishment, as he beheld the beautiful features of Zehra!

“Great God!” he ejaculated, still gazing on the face that was turned toward him, “do my eyes deceive me, or is this the daughter of Ben Hamed?”

“Let me go, sir,” murmured the girl as she feebly en-

deavored to remove the strong hand that was laid upon her.

“But tell me if I am not right. Is not this Zehra?”

“Alas! it is, sir. O, let me go!”

“Hold a moment,” said Charles. “Do you recognize me?”

“Yes; you are the noble Christian knight on whom I bestowed the badge of honor.”

“And is it possible I have saved you from a fearful death?”

“Death!” murmured Zehra, looking mournfully up into the knight’s face. “No, no—it was life I sought.

Charles of Leon was struck by the strange manner of the fair girl, and if he had thought that her mind might be wandering, he was convinced to the contrary while he gazed into her face. All was strangely calm there, and a mournful determination was seated upon her thin, pale lips.

“Will you trust me with the secret of this?” asked the knight, as he gently drew the poor girl farther from the river. “I pledge you my knightly word that I will not betray you.”

“And will you let me seek my rest when I have told you?”

“I will try that you have rest,” returned the knight. “Now tell me why you should seek the fearful death you have courted.”

“Death to the faithful is but the passage from earth to heaven. ’Tis but to leave the dark shades of sorrow behind us, and bound to the rest of that realm where Allah cannot forsake those who love him. I would have died, because earth is all misery to me now. I cannot live, when to live is to be unhappy.”

“Can one so beautiful as you be unhappy,” said the

knight, instinctively drawing Zehra nearer to him, and gazing more intently upon her features.

“Beautiful!” repeated the girl. “Alas! sir, it is because I am thought beautiful that I must suffer. Were my face made up of wrinkles and fearful blotches—were my form ill-shapen, and my health, even, gone from me, I might be happy.”

“You have not told me yet of the sorrow from which you seek escape.”

“Then listen, sir. My father has given me to the king, and I am to be one among his wives!”

“To Mohammed!” muttered Charles. “To be a bauble in the harem of that sensual profligate? Impossible!”

“I have spoken the truth, sir knight, and I have trusted to your honor.”

“And you have trusted to a honor that is not tarnished,” quickly returned the knight, with tender enthusiasm. Then in a lower tone he added, “you cannot love such a man as he.”

“Love him!” cried Zehra. “I can only loathe him. Ah! death were indeed preferable.”

“Your father must be indeed cruel. You have given your heart to another.”

Charles spoke this almost at random, as he looked into Zehra's face. She was silent for a moment; but soon she replied:

“You mistake me, sir. 'Tis no selfish motive that moves me. I would only save myself from the misery of the life my father has doomed me to suffer; I have no other object; my heart looks not beyond that escape. Now let me go, sir.”

“And if I release you now, will you seek that death from which I have just withdrawn you?”

Zehra bowed her head and gazed long upon the greensward at her feet. She trembled with emotion, and Charles saw tears glisten in the moonbeams as they fell from her cheeks.

"If you leave me now, will you still seek the grave of the Darro?" repeated the knight.

"O, sir, I cannot live to be the thing they would make me. I cannot live to feel the affections of my heart withering in their bloom, and sinking away into the cold grave of misery. I cannot live to know my love must freeze in the earliest flood. I will die."

It was some moments ere the Christian knight dared make reply to this. Those were days when the knights held it a sacred duty—a duty of knightly honor—to protect females from the hand of suffering; but this was not taken upon themselves merely as a thing of duty. The heart had much to do with it. Charles of Leon had entered Granada with a whole heart in his bosom; but since the moment when the Moorish maiden had smiled upon him in his moment of proud victory he had given her a place in his heart. As he gazed upon her now, he knew that the whole of his heart was hers. There was no thought of expediency in his bosom—no thought of causes and consequences—but he acknowledged to himself the whole truth. Those tears that fell from the dark lashes of the beautiful girl, spoke a language to his soul more strong than words, and the keenest of her sufferings strongly appealed to his every sense of humanity and knightly honor.

"Fair maiden," he said, at length—and he took her unresisting hand as he spoke—"this is a strange time and place for us to meet, and the circumstances of the moment are more strange still. You must not die—you shall not. 'Tis a fearful thought to dwell upon self-murder!"

Zehra started at the words and the tone in which they were uttered, and she gazed up into the speaker's face.

"Alas! and is it not a fearful thought to dwell upon a life such that to which I am doomed?" she murmured.

"But are there not those who can save you from such a fate?"

"No. Who shall dare to thwart the king?"

"A bold, true-hearted knight shall do it. Were Mohammed a thousand times a king, I would dare snatch you from his grasp."

"*You?*" uttered Zehra, starting with a sudden thrill of deep emotion.

"Yes, fair maiden. If you will trust to me, I swear by the cross of the Savior, that while I live you shall not be the king's."

Zehra bowed her head, and Charles of Leon felt her hand tremble violently.

"Speak to me. Will you accept my pledge?" he asked.

"I ought not, from a Christian knight."

"But you, too, shall be a Christian. You shall bask under the sunlight of that religion that makes women sacred—that religion that recognizes the love of the human heart as one of its own brightest attributes. Many of the Moors are Christians."

"I know it," returned Zehra, with her eyes still bent to the ground. "Once I had a nurse who was a Christian, and she taught me your religion."

"And did you not love it? Did your soul not go forth in worship toward that Savior who died for a sinful world—that blessed Savior whose every thought was love, and whose heart knew no ambition but to make those happy and good about him? Zehra, could you not be a Christian?"

"I have often thought so."

"And may it not be mine to teach you? Tell me—will you accept my pledge?"

The fair maiden turned her gaze upon the face of the man who spoke to her, and the deep sorrow had given place to a look of calmer, holier feeling.

"I cannot reject your kind offer," she said.

"And you will trust fully?"

"Yes."

"Zehra, if your happiness cannot be secured in Granada, what then?"

The maiden pointed to the waters of the Darro

"Know you not that there are other places besides Granada, and besides the Darro?"

"None for me."

"Yes, there are. Surely you would not hesitate to flee this country, if misery alone awaited you here?"

"No."

"You would not hesitate to leave even the roof of your father?"

The maiden started, and withdrew her hand from the hold where it had been resting. Though she seemed on the point of speaking, yet she remained silent.

"Did my speech offend you?" asked the knight.

"No, no, sir. I only thought how meagre are the ties that bind me to Ben Hamed."

"But he is your father."

"You said I might trust you."

"Most implicitly," returned Charles.

"Then," said Zehra, in a low tone, "I have reason to believe he is not my father; but he dreams not that I hold the suspicion. You would hold me indeed heartless could I willingly fly from the parent that gave me being."

"Not if he were cruel."

"Cruelty, even, may not separate the heart of child and parent. But I feel that Ben Hamed is not my parent. My old nurse told me he was not, and I have reasons to believe her words were true."

"You may be missed," said Charles. "Let us return."

The fair girl placed her hand freely in that of the knight, and together they turned back toward the city. Charles of Leon would have questioned her more concerning her parentage, but he had too much delicacy. He felt a strange interest in the being who had thus been thrown in his way, and with that impulse which seldom springs up in a heart but once in a life time—he had resolved he would love her with his whole love and faith.

Some might say the Christian knight was blind. Perhaps he was, as the world of selfishness goes; but where generous love and kindness of heart can see, there he walked. His was a soul that curbed not those impulses that led him toward the boon of joy; for he had no impulses that were not born in honor.

"Here, kind sir, I will turn off," said Zehra, as they reached a point where a group of poplars and orange trees reached back to a line of buildings near the banks of the Zenil.

"I will accompany you to the dwelling of Ben Hamed."

"No, no. You might be seen."

"As you will, lady—but ere we part, I would say one word more. When does your father mean to give you to the king?"

"In three short months."

"Then will you accept my knightly faith for your protection! If you will I shall feel authority to serve you."

"I do accept it, sir," returned Zehra.

"Then go your way, and God be with you."

As Charles of Leon spoke he pressed the hand he held to his lips, and in a moment more Zehra glided from his sight among the orange trees.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE VISITOR.

“HOLD, Moor ! Tell me where is my master.”

“Take care how you handle your sword, good Pedro. You might hurt somebody.”

“San Jago, bless me. May I be roasted alive on St. Lawrence’s gridiron, if I didn’t fear that you were gone.”

“Not quite,” said Charles, with a laugh, as he entered the room and threw off his Moorish cap and mantle.

“But bless me, sir Charles, it’s long after midnight. Where have you been ?” uttered the honest squire, as he stood in his night-clothes. “I got up only a few minutes ago, and something put it into my head to come and see if you were safe. I saw your cap and cloak here, and I feared some of the Moors had carried you off.”

“No, no, Pedro ; I have only been enjoying a short walk by moonlight. I wouldn’t disturb you, for I knew that you were fatigued, and that you love your sleep.”

“I don’t love my sleep so well but that I can attend my master ; and if he knows when he’s safe he won’t walk much alone after dark.”

“Is there danger ?” asked the knight, in a light merry tone.

“More than you wot of, perhaps,” returned Pedro, with much earnestness. “Let me tell you that the alcalde won’t forgive you for having beat him in the lists. And there’s more, too.”

"Ah," uttered the knight, becoming more serious as he saw the earnestness of his follower.

"Yes. I believe you are narrowly watched."

"By whom?"

"By emissaries of the alcalde."

"Pooh!"

"By San Dominic, sir Charles, I believe I tell you the truth."

"And for what should they watch me?"

"Perhaps they suspect we are here for no good purpose."

"Then let them suspect, and let them watch, too. They will see nothing to help them. My commission can be performed without much show."

"I think it will prove the blind man's mission, after all," said Pedro.

Charles looked into his esquire's face for a moment, and then he placed his hand upon his brow.

"Pedro," he said, at length, "I hope I shall succeed. For the sake of Leon and Castile, I hope so."

"And for your sake, too, my master."

Again Charles of Leon placed his hand upon his brow, and for some moments he dwelt in his own thoughts. Pedro watched him narrowly, and he was not a little puzzled at his master's manner.

"Go seek your rest again, Pedro," said the knight, as he turned toward his dressing-table.

The faithful esquire obeyed without remark; but when he reached the door, he turned and looked back upon his master. There was a look of anxiety in his countenance, and his lips moved with his thoughts as he passed out.

After Pedro had gone, the count sat down to his dressing-case, and drawing forth from his bosom a roll of parchment, he opened it, and began to look over its contents by

the light of the lamp his servant had left. He read it half through, and then letting go of its corners he allowed it to roll up on its own accord, while he braced back in his chair and gazed vacantly into the space before him.

“I believe Pedro tells me the truth,” he said to himself. “The alcalde is surely my enemy, and I may yet make him doubly so. Yet there can be no danger, for they will not dare to touch me without strong provocation. I will perform my mission if possible, and when I return to Leon——”

The young Christian hesitated in his speech, and arose from his seat. His thoughts were upon Zehra, and he dared not give them utterance. He took up the parchment, and as he gazed upon it his features trembled.

“To both these deeds my knightly word is pledged,” he said, as he placed the roll once more in his bosom. “Yet they need not clash—they cannot. Zehra—beautiful, lovely girl—with you I will keep my faith. Let the danger come—and it may come from Leon as well as here—but I can face it for you.”

It was but a few moments after Charles had put the parchment in his bosom, and just as he was thinking of seeking his couch, that he heard a sound outside of one of his windows. There was a broad veranda ran around the building on a level with the floor upon which was the knight's apartment, and Charles thought it might be some one merely passing the window. In a moment there was a dark shadow thrown across the floor, where the moonbeams lay, and upon turning he saw the figure of a man outside of the window. He started back to the table where he had laid his sword, and as he grasped its hilt the window was thrown open, and the stranger stepped quickly into the apartment.

"Put up your weapon, Charles of Leon," said the new comer. "I am far from meaning you harm."

"You choose a strange time for a visit, at all events," said the knight, holding his sword in his hand. "And there is a door to my room, too."

"Never mind the time, nor the mode of my entrance, sir knight. Do you not recognize me?"

"Abdalla?" uttered Charles, as he now recognized in his visitor the lame man whom he had picked up from the roadside, and whom he had seen once since at the tournament.

"Yes," returned the Moor. "I told you when I first saw you that we might never meet again, but you see that we have met notwithstanding."

Charles gazed upon his visitor with no little degree of curiosity and wonder, and instinctively he left his sword settle back into its scabbard.

"There is a seat at your disposal," said the knight, "and if it would please you I would hear your business."

"My business is but little, sir Charles, and before I speak of it I must assure you that I come as no spy upon you. What passes between us is sacred with us. I know that you have come to Granada with some sort of a mission from King John of Leon and Castile. You need not start. Now dare you tell me what that mission is!"

"I dare tell you, but I shall not."

The Moor smiled.

"You own that you have a mission, then?"

"I have not owned it, nor have I contradicted you."

"Very well—let it pass. I think not that you would have traveled so far without an object."

Charles eyed his visitor uneasily. There was something in the Moor's look that half awed and half puzzled him. On the present occasion Abdalla looked the same

as he did on the morning when the Christian had met him on the road; but yet Charles could see that he was deeply disguised. There was a look of more than common intelligence in his countenance, and his eyes themselves spoke a volume of character. One thing, more than all else, however, moved Charles with a sort of distrust. The Moor seemed uneasy and anxious. His glances were quick and varying, and the least movement of the vines that grew up about the windows caused him to start with half-developed fear.

“Charles of Leon,” continued the Moor, after a moment’s silence, “I am going to ask you an important question. I, too, am a knight, and upon my knightly honor I swear that your answer, whatever it may be, shall not pass from my lips. I have reason to believe you are here on secret business. Now will your king pursue this thing with a sword, if necessary?”

“Upon my faith, sir, you ask me a curious question,” returned the Christian.

“And I have a curious reason for asking it,” said the Moor.

“You display but little wit, at all events. You know me—know my rank, station, and title, and profess even to know my very business; while I know nothing at all of you—not even your name, for that matter.”

As the Christian knight ceased speaking he was struck by the change that came over the Moor’s countenance. His eyes sparkled with a fierce lustre, his lips were compressed tightly over his pearly teeth, and his brow grew dark.

“Rank! station! name!” he uttered, in thrilling accents. “Charles of Leon, I have none! I have only my honor left to me, and that I will keep. I have reason

for asking the question. Will King John send an army if you should fail?"

"You ask me that which I cannot answer," returned Charles, gazing with growing interest upon his strange visitor.

"If you know, I implore you to tell me," urged Abdalla.

"Look ye, Moor," said the Christian; "you seem to know not what you are asking of me. Here am I, a stranger in your city, perhaps with spies already upon my movements, looked upon with distrust by your alcalde, and known to be an adherent to the government which has heretofore been hostile to the Moslem. Now, with what reason can you ask me such a question and expect that I should answer it?"

The Moor looked troubled.

"I confess," he returned, "that my question may seem out of place; but your thoughts could be no more safe in your own bosom than they might be in mine."

"That is not the way I generally regard important secrets. But I will tell you the truth. King John will not send an armed force to Granada. He has as much as he can do to look out for his troubles at home. You should know that the holy brotherhood of Leon are giving him trouble enough. Whatever may be my business here, I have nothing to do with your government nor its affairs, nor will my king do it either."

"Then I have nothing more to ask of you," said the Moor, while a disappointed look settled upon his features.

"But I have a question to ask of you," said Charles. "You say you know the business that has brought me here. I should like to know how you obtained your information?"

"By my simple knowledge of facts that are in existence."

"Ah," uttered the Christian, with a slight start, a look of anxious interest manifesting itself on his features the while. "Could you then give me information? Know you what I seek?"

"I *think* I do."

"What?"

"I cannot tell you that until you confirm me in my belief of what you seek."

Charles of Leon felt almost sure that the Moor was but acting the spy upon him. To be sure the Moslem's countenance gave denial to such a supposition, but yet the count would not trust him."

"I don't think I shall need your assistance," he said, after a few moments of thought.

"I may have no assistance to render you. In fact I have none to offer," returned Abdalla, as he gathered his mantle about him and arose from his seat. "I sought you because I had a faint hope that John of Leon and Castile would have had the daring to have pushed his mission with the sword, or at least to have threatened that thing."

"And I assure you he has no such intention."

"I believe you."

"Sir Moor, methinks you can have no very great love for Granada."

"Love for Granada!" repeated Abdalla. "Ah, Sir knight, you cannot read my soul as you can your own. But I must leave you now. You will excuse me if I go the same way I came. We *may* meet again. If we do it will be a stranger meeting than this. Beware of the al-calde!"

As the Moor spoke he threw back the door-like sash of

the window and stepped out upon the veranda, and in a moment he was gone.

Charles of Leon pondered long upon the strange meeting. He had no fear of the Moslem, for he had taken care not to commit himself; but he could not help thinking that in some way Abdalla was acting the spy. He doubted if the Moor knew as much as he professed.

"He only said that to try me," said the young knight to himself, as he began to prepare for his couch. "The Moor can know nothing of the business that has brought me here. How should he? By my faith, I am not to be thrown off my guard in that way."

Ere long Charles laid himself down upon his couch, and that night his dreams were many and varied; and when Pedro came to awaken him in the morning it seemed as though he had not slept at all.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REJECTED WIFE.

IN one of the most luxurious apartments of the Alhambra sat Mohammed. Near him, upon a soft Persian lounge, sat a female whose costume showed her to be one of the wives of the Granadan monarch. She was still a young woman, though the bloom of her life had passed prematurely away. There was beauty too upon her countenance—such beauty as the true husband should delight to honor—a beauty that had shed all its early bloom upon Mohammed's path, and now that it had turned upon its fading point it should have been loved more than ever. It should have called forth that holy love of the soul which unites gratitude with reverence. That woman was Emina, the

mother of Mohammed's only son. She had been weeping.

"Do you speak the truth?" she asked, with an evident attempt to suppress the feelings that were rising in her bosom.

"Most assuredly I do, Emina," returned the king.

"And do you mean to make Zehra your wife?"

"Yes."

"Mohammed, this is cruel; it is unjust. Have I not been faithful?"

"I have no fault to find on that score."

"And have I not loved ever you?"

"You have ever professed to."

"And you know I have; and now you would cast me away and put another in my place."

"It is my pleasure, Emina."

"Your pleasure? And have I grown so old and ugly that you can love me no longer?"

"Your beauty is fast departing."

"O, misery!"

"Don't take it so hard, Emina. I mean you no wrong. You shall have the same place in my palace as ever."

"The same place in your palace!" bitterly cried the woman. "Do you think I am a dog that can be satisfied with a gilded kennel? No, Mohammed, I want your love—I want that place in your heart that belongs to me. You shall not take the alcalde's daughter to your bosom."

"In truth, Emina, I shall exercise my own taste about that. I want none of your advice."

"Listen to me, Mohammed," cried Emina, starting up from her chair. "You know not what a woman can be if you think to trifle with me thus. I have borne everything for your sake; for years have I been true as heaven itself to you, and now I am to be thrown aside as useless rubbish; and what is worse than all *another* is to take my place. An-

other ! O, Mohammed, do you realize the sting that pierces my soul at such a thought? and do you know the spirit you may call up?"

"Peace, woman!" uttered the king, slightly shrinking from the woman that had so long been his favorite wife, and whom he even now stood in some dread of should her anger be aroused.

"I cannot hold my peace until you have told me that Zehra shall not be your wife."

"She *will* be my wife."

"You have decided then."

"Most irrevocably."

"Then, Mohammed, take your own course." Emina spoke in a tone of strange calmness, and save the intense fire that burned in her large, dark eyes, she showed little of passion. "Take your own course," she said, "and let me be cast from you; but as I have loved, so can I hate. The love that burns in my bosom knows no gradual cooling. If its lamp goes out it will freeze like the heaven-reaching crown of Nevada, and you will be to me but as the being who robbed me of life."

"Beware, Emina; beware that you use no threats to me."

"And what if I do threaten?"

"The executioner's cimeter is sharp."

Emina's countenance grew more pale and her eyes flashed more brilliantly.

"I have not threatened you," she whispered, while she pressed her hand upon her bosom as if to still the tumult of her heart. "You know me well enough to know that I can be as proud as you; but if you think another wife can live here you know me not as I am. Give me back your heart and let me know that I am your wife as I have been, and I will be all to you that you can wish."

“You know my decision,” returned the king, in a stern tone. “Now leave me.”

Emina turned away and Mohammed saw not the look that rested upon her countenance. If he had seen it he would have trembled at its darkness. The veins about her pale temples were swollen, the eyes were set with fearful brilliancy that had no sparkling in its intensity, and the fingers of her right hand seemed pressed through the quivering flesh of her bosom. No breath seemed to move her—no impulse was apparent; but she looked as though her whole being was one vast thought that slumbered upon the verge of action. As she passed out from the apartment Mohammed sprang to his feet.

“By Allah,” he explained, “she takes it more seriously than I had thought; but she will forget it in time. She should not have grown old if she would have kept my love. Pooh! She’ll rest easy enough if I am but kind to her, and I mean not to be unkind. I have loved her, and I think she loves me even now; but Zehra is young and beautiful.”

The last thought seemed to give Mohammed a pleasing turn of mind; but a shadow soon settled over his countenance. Though he had longed to put away his long favorite wife, yet he feared her. He feared that she might be more dangerous than he had at first imagined, for he knew that she was proud of spirit, warm and impulsive in her temperament, and that she possessed a will as strong as was his own. But yet the Moslem king was not to be turned from his purpose. He had seen the beautiful Zehra, and he had resolved to possess her. To this end had he made Ben Hamed alcalde of Granada, and to this end did he keep Ben Hamed in his office.

When Emina left the king’s presence she went to her own apartment, and having sunk down upon her couch, she

bursts into tears. It was a long time that she wept, for the fountains of her heart were loosened. She had loved Mohammed with her whole soul. He was the father of her child, and to him her young heart's affections had been given. It was no selfish love she had felt, but her feelings toward her royal husband had been of that warm, generous, noble character that all centre in the object loved. Mohammed had taught her to be proud too, and now, in the moment of her love's crushing, that pride gradually arose above the ruins and its torch was fearfully brilliant. The tears ceased to flow and one after another they dried from her pale cheeks.

When she arose from her couch the only traces of weeping were in the swollen marks about the eyes. She looked still pale, but yet there was a hectic flush upon either cheek, and that pallor bore nothing of melancholy in its character. The lips moved not with the thought that was busy in her brain, but they seemed rather compressed to keep that thought from escaping. She examined her features in the polished mirror that hung in her apartment, and when she turned away she touched the bell-cord that was suspended near her.

A servant soon entered and Emina ordered her to bring her a hood and mantle and prepare to accompany her. While her attendant was gone, the woman went to her dressing-case and from one of the drawers she took a small dagger. She examined its bright, keen point, and then placed it carefully in her bosom. In a moment more the attendant re-entered and proceeded to help her mistress dress.

"There, Mada—now follow me," said Emina, as she turned to leave the apartment. "Remember that you speak not of this to any one, for I go in secret."

The maid bowed a silent assent and followed her mistress as directed.

Emina took a private passage, and having passed to the basement of the palace, she made her egress through a small door that opened upon the hill in the rear. The thick foliage shielded her from observation, and with quick steps she made her way down to the rapid Darro at a point where a narrow foot-bridge was thrown across the stream. Having crossed this, she bent her steps toward the dwelling of Ben Hamed. She walked with a firm step, but quicker than usual, and there was more of masculine power in her step than Mada had ever before seen in her mistress.

The distance from the river to the dwelling of the alcalde was not great, and when Emina reached the garden she entered the gateway and approached the building by the way that led to the women's apartments. One of the female attendants obeyed her summons. The presence of the king's favorite wife was a powerful talisman, and without hesitation her demand to be shown to the apartment of Zehra was complied with, Mada in the meantime being ordered to remain behind.

Zehra was startled by the appearance of Emina, but she paid her due reverence and humbly asked her pleasure. The visitor calmly dismissed the attendant and then turning to Zehra she asked :

“Are we alone?”

“Yes,” returned the girl, as she gazed wonderingly into the pale features of her visitor.

“Do I look well?” Emina continued as she took a seat.

“Not very well, lady.”

“But you do look exceeding well. And you look beautiful, too.”

Zehra tried to smile, but it was beyond her power. She was startled by Emina's strange manner.

"I was once beautiful," continued Mohammed's wife—"almost as beautiful as you."

"You are beautiful still," said Zehra.

"But not beautiful enough. Beauty should never fade."

"All things earthly must fade."

"Are you not a happy creature?" Emina asked.

Zehra only gazed upon her interlocutor in silence.

"You should be happy, for life opens a kind future to you," continued Emina. "When you are—are—Mohammed's *wife*, you will be happy."

"Oh! for kind Heaven's sake, torture me not with——"

"Go on—go on," uttered the queen, drawing a quick breath.

"I can trust you—you will be kind—you will not betray me."

"No—go on."

Emina spoke with energy, and she leaned forward to catch the words that might fall from the fair girl's lips.

"I trust my own sex will not turn against me," murmured Zehra.

"How? why?" quickly asked the queen, while her hand slowly moved toward her bosom.

"I cannot be Mohammed's wife. O, I cannot."

"Cannot? But the king loves you."

"No, no—he cannot love me. Only my beauty pleases him."

"Suppose he *did* love you?"

"Even then I could not be his. O, noble lady, you, who have a woman's heart, should know the secrets of the female soul. You should know what misery must be in that lifetime that presents nothing upon which the heart can fasten in love."

Zehra hesitated, and then with a sudden movement she cast herself at the feet of the queen.

"Oh! perhaps you can save me. Perhaps you can persuade the king to let me be happy. Will you not?"

"I have little power over Mohammed. I think you might be happy in his company. He will be lavish of kind acts when once you are his youngest wife."

"Ah, noble lady, you can know little of kindness if you think as you speak. Could you be shut up for life in some dark, loathsome dungeon, where the light of day was forever excluded—where noisome vapors and pestilential malaria clung about you—and there treat as kindness any act of him who thus confined you?"

The expression upon the queen's countenance was gradually changing. Still she looked upon the beautiful girl with a burning eye.

"Mohammed will make you his wife," she said.

"No, no—he cannot."

"Ah, but he has power."

"Not to do that," returned Zehra, rising to her feet and throwing back the dark silken tresses that had fallen about her face.

"Yes, he has," whispered Emina.

"Hark," uttered Zehra. "Hear you that murmuring noise?"

"Yes."

"It is the dark, swift Darro. If Mohammed takes me for his wife he will take me cold and lifeless from its rushing flood. Allah gives me so much of hope."

For a long while the queen gazed into the face of the girl before her. The stern coldness was all gone from her features, and her lips trembled with emotion.

"Zehra," she said, as she drew the trembling fair one to her bosom, "I know that you speak the truth, and I am almost happy, for I am saved a deed I trembled to commit. Tremble not, for you need fear no longer. Had I found

you loving toward Mohammed you should not have lived to receive his embrace ; but now you need not even fear him. I have loved the king most truly, and I swear by the Prophet most high that none other shall take my place of wife while I breathe the breath of life ! ”

As the queen spoke, she turned from Zehra and buried her face in her hands.

“ Do not let this affect you so, ” kindly urged the young girl, laying her hand upon Emina’s shoulder and gazing up into her face.

“ You are not a wife, Zehra, ” returned the queen, as she brushed a tear from her cheek. “ You have not felt the crushing of your heart’s whole love, and experienced the dark night that succeeds the setting of the sun of life. I have felt all this. ”

“ Heaven rest you. ”

“ Heaven may rest another first ! ”

Emina spoke this in a strange tone, and without waiting to observe its effect upon Zehra, she turned toward the door of the apartment. Silently she passed out from the room, and at the garden door she met Mada. As she glided away through the shrubbery she fervently murmured :

“ Thank Allah, I return with a bloodless dagger. ”

Mada heard her not, for the words were but breathed into being.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOVER’S CONFERENCE.

CHARLES OF LEON had seen enough to convince him that he was watched by the spies of the alcalde of Granada : but why this should be he could not imagine, unless some false idea was entertained of his visit to Southern Spain.

To be sure he had other business than to travel, but then he felt confident that no one save himself and the servant could know of it. He did not believe that Abdalla knew as much as he professed, or even that he mistrusted the truth. More likely was it that the mysterious man only threw out his vague assertions for the purpose of penetrating the Christian's secret. Why, then, should the alcalde persecute him? It might be from motives of chagrin caused by the defeat at the tournament; but even this surmise did not wholly satisfy him.

The day was drawing to a close—it was the day succeeding that on which the events recorded in the last chapter took place. Charles of Leon was in the room at the hotel he had chosen, and Pedro was engaged in polishing some portions of his master's armor.

“Have you gained any clue yet to the end of our business?” asked the esquire.

“No.”

“Nor will you, I'm thinking. Let us get out of this place.”

“Not yet, Pedro. Ere long I may.”

“But what shall keep us?”

“I may find what I seek.”

“In Granada?”

“Perhaps so.”

Pedro looked curiously up into his master's face, for the manner of speech struck him as being peculiar.

“You shall accompany me to-night,” continued Charles, “so have our weapons ready. We may need them.”

“Look at this, Sir Charles,” said Pedro, stopping his work, and gazing earnestly into his master's face. “I don't wish to be impertinent, nor will I be—but I should like to know if this business to-night had anything to do with what we are after?”

"And suppose it does not?"

"Then it had better be dropped."

"Ah, you are getting sage, Pedro."

"No—I am always wise. You think of going to Ben Hamed's dwelling to-night."

"Ha!"

"Yes. You talk in your sleep?"

The young knight blushed, for he saw that Pedro had an inkling of the truth.

"Well, well," he said, at length, "I am going to Ben Hamed's, and I wish you to go with me."

"If you persist, I cannot disobey. But you are running your neck into a dangerous place, for I hear that Zehra is to become the king's wife."

"And do you think that fair young creature shall be sacrificed to the lust of Mohammed?"

"If she don't like it, it does seem hard."

"Like it!" uttered Charles. "I'll tell you how she likes it." And thereupon he told to his esquire all that had transpired upon the banks of the Darro.

"Then by San Dominic," cried Pedro, as he leaped to his feet, "I'll join you with my whole heart."

"I knew your heart was in the right place," said Charles, with a grateful look.

"So it is, my master."

"Now you must perform a mission for me ere we set out together. I have procured the dress of a Moorish physician, and I wish that you should put it on, and after nightfall go to Ben Hamed's dwelling and see if you can discover which is the room Zehra occupies. Think you can do it?"

"I can but try."

"I thank you, Pedro."

"But hold a moment, my master," said the esquire, as a

sudden shade of thought flashed across his countenance.

"You won't go too far in his business?"

"Fear not for that, Pedro."

The honest esquire, though he entered fully into his master's plans, did not yet feel quite satisfied as to their result, and when he left the hotel after dark, dressed up in his disguise, he did not fail to speak his misgivings; but the young knight had no eye to see the danger, and Pedro set off upon his mission.

Two hours passed away, and Charles of Leon was becoming impatient, when Pedro entered his apartment.

"What luck?" anxiously asked Charles.

"I've found the room the girl occupies, and a tough job I had of it too. San Dominic, but those accursed heathens need to be punished. One pulled my robe, another pulled my pouch, while a third gave a twitch at my beard; and may I be blessed, if he didn't come near pulling it clean off. San Jago, how my dagger itched."

"But they didn't discover you, Pedro?" uttered the knight with some anxiety.

"No. I held my temper till I found out what I was after, and then I took myself off."

"Never mind. You may throw off your physician's garb now. You shall have a different one for to-night."

"Now, Sir Charles, this helping the Moorish girl away from the heathenish old king is all very well; but what are you going to do with her after that?"

The knight bit his lip.

"Of course you don't think of taking her to Leon," persisted Pedro.

"And why not?"

"Why not! Why, what would folks say of you? San Dominic! suppose the poor thing should fall in love with you? You know you are wonderful good-featured, and

right handsome for a man and it wouldn't be her fault, neither."

The knight smiled a faint, forced smile at Pedro's query, and with all due haste he changed the conversation.

It was near ten o'clock when Charles of Leon set out in company with his esquire. He was habited in a rich Moorish costume, and Pedro wore a garb of the same description. The knight carried a small lute beneath his arm, and as he passed out from his hotel, he looked carefully about him to see that he was not observed—or that no one was watching him. Having become satisfied on that point, he started off.

The two men walked rapidly until they reached the wall of Ben Hamed's garden, and here they listened to see that all was safe. As no sound was heard, Pedro led the way to a small gate he had marked, and here they gained the garden without difficulty. With careful steps the knight followed his servant along through the shrubbery until they reached a small arbor near the house.

"There," whispered Pedro, pointing up to a window not far from the ground, where a light was burning, "that is the girl's apartment."

"Are you sure?"

"As sure as I am that I'm alive."

"Then you remain here. Let your arms be ready, but move not unless there is danger."

"San Jago! but there's danger enough already."

"Are you afraid?"

"No. But yet there's danger."

"So much the better. We ought to love danger by this time."

"I never could see the use of that, though if danger comes, Pedro Bambino will be the last one to run."

"Yes, good Pedro, I know you have a brave heart."

“Yes, and it may be well for you, Sir Charles, that I have a cool head.”

“sh! Was that a step?”

“Yes. Draw back—back, Sir Charles.”

A servant passed near the spot where our two adventurers were located, but he was quickly out of sight, and when once again all was still, Charles stealthily approached the house. At a convenient position he picked up a few small pebbles and threw them against the lighted window. Twice he repeated the experiment, and then he had the satisfaction of seeing some one approach the window.

The knight drew nearer, and taking his lute from its resting-place, he swept the strings with a light touch, and then commenced a low, thrilling song, improvising as he went along. The words were meant for Zehra's ears, and ere long the window was opened. Charles hushed his lute and bent eagerly forward.

“Who calls me?” asked the sweet voice of Zehra, at the same time looking down upon the figure that was revealed by the bright moonlight.

“Your Christian knight,” returned Charles.

“Give me some token.”

“The Darro. Can you not join me, Zehra? I would speak with you.”

“’Twill be dangerous to you,” returned the maiden.

“No, no. Think not of danger to me. Come to me, I implore you!”

“If the way is open I will.”

The knight's heart beat with joy as Zehra disappeared from the window, and moved out of the way to await her coming. Pedro expostulated with his master on the propriety of thus calling the girl from her father's dwelling; but ere he could make any visible impression on the mind

of the young man, the sound of a light footfall was heard, and in a moment more he sprang forth to meet Zehra.

Pedro was directed to remain where he was, to give warning of danger, and then taking the maiden by the hand, Charles led her away out into the garden.

"I bless you that you trust me," said the knight as they gained a distant spot.

"And why should I not trust you?"

"You should; and in trusting me may I not feel that you love me?"

"I would love you if I dared," returned Zehra, with her eyes bent on the ground.

"And can you fear to love me?"

"Between the Christian and the Moor I know there have been happy loves," said Zehra; "and how can I think of one like you without warmer feelings than those of mere gratitude? But I should fear to leave my heart where it would be lost to me."

"Give it to me, lady. Let me have your heart, and in return you shall have one as warm and true as ever beat in human bosom. With us there is no time for dalliance. We are separated by walls that admit of no social intercourse. If we speak it must be to the point. You can love me and you will. I will be faithful and true."

"I am not to blame for a feeling that gives me joy," softly returned the fair maiden.

"Enough," uttered Charles of Leon. "And now for the future. You must go with me to Leon—to my own country."

"Will they be kind to the poor Moorish girl there?"

"Kind? Ah. You will be my wife, and who shall then dare to be otherwise than kind?"

"Oh, if I thought you would always love me, always
——"

"Hush, Zehra. When I prove false to you I pray that my right hand may wither, and my heart dry up. You will go with me from here."

"I can go the better, for I know that Ben Hamed is not my father. What is the matter, sir?"

"Nothing, nothing. Go on. How know you that he is not your parent?"

"By witty words last evening I drew him forth to confessions that opened to me the truth I sought. He spoke not plainly of this thing, nor did I straightway question him, but by slow degrees, while he thought I was aiming at the king, did I aim at this, and he obeyed my wish without a suspicious doubt."

"And did you learn whence came the fountain of your blood?"

"No. I dared not question too much."

"You know nothing, then, save that Ben Hamed is not your father?"

"That is all, except that I am the price at which he holds his office."

"I would that you could have learned more from him," said Charles, in a thoughtful mood. "Have you no memories beyond your knowledge of Ben Hamed?"

"No."

For some moments the Christian knight's heart beat with a strange power. He looked earnestly into the face of his companion, as though he would have read her whole life-history from her features. His countenance was lighted up by a curious combination of love, hope, and anxiety, and he stopped in his walk as he lost himself in the labyrinth of his own thick-coming thoughts.

"What thought is it that possesses you?" asked Zehra, as she looked wonderingly up into the Christian's face.

"The thought was of you, lady; but it had no definite

point. Yet, I wish you could learn more of your early life."

"I know not where I should learn it; I must trust to time for that."

"Then so be it," returned Charles. "And now let us turn upon another matter. Did you know that Mohammed might alter his mind?"

"How?" uttered Zehra, somewhat startled by the question.

"That he might conclude to hasten this odious plan of his—that he might conclude to steal a march upon time, and take you sooner than you expect."

"Indeed, I believe him capable of it."

"And do you not think Ben Hamed would give way should the king demand you of him?"

"Yes, yes—alas! yes."

Before Charles spoke again, Zehra related to him the circumstances of her interview with Emina.

"I fear you can place little reliance on that," said Charles. "The queen is impulsive, and the sudden thoughts of the wrong she was to suffer made her frenzied. Zehra, you must flee with me, and that, too, as soon as possible. I will have all in readiness, and we will leave Granada."

It was some time before the maiden spoke. She uttered an objection, but it was tremblingly made, and while she hung upon the young knight's arm, she listened to his warm pleadings with a quickly beating heart. She spoke again, and again Charles of Leon pleaded. He told her of his home in Leon—of the bright flowers and brighter love that should be hers, and he softly swore that he would ever love her, and cherish her, even honor her, and ever be by her side to point out to her and guide her in the road to sweet happiness.

The gentle maiden laid her head upon the young Christian's bosom, and in a soft whisper she consented to love and obey. She looked happy as she spoke, and Charles could see that she trusted him with her whole faith.

When the count turned toward Ben Hamed's dwelling, their plans for the future were all arranged. The time was set for their departure from Granada, and they seemed to forget that there might be obstacles in the way. They spoke as though the future were in their hands, and that they could mould it to their will.

Pedro was glad to be relieved of his watch, and he assured his master that no one had been stirring. Zehra received one kiss from her Christian lover, and then she glided away toward the house, while Charles and Pedro took their steps carefully back toward the point from whence they came.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CRUCIFIX.

ZEHRA glided carefully along through the passages that led to her apartment, and as she went her soul was filled by a variety of emotions. She did not suffer one pang of conscience for what she had done, for in her pure heart she believed she had only been reaching forth for that happiness which by right belonged to her, and, which was denied to her by Ben Hamed. In Charles of Leon she had found one whom she could love—one whom she loved when first she saw him, and the affections of her young heart had gathered about him as gathers the sunlight about the earth from the rising orb of day. They had shot forth with that mysterious power which belongs only to love—a power

which may never be surely analysed, and which admits of no similes.

The maiden had nearly reached her apartment, when she was startled by the appearance of a dusky form before her. The moonlight found its way into the long passage through the windows of the tower that capped the building, and that light was just sufficient to show that the form that had appeared was possessed of life. Zehra moved more quickly toward her room, and she reached it before the unknown came up. She hastily opened the door, but as she closed it she heard quick steps, and before she could move the bolt a strong hand pushed the door back, and Ben Hamed stalked into the apartment. The lamp was still burning which Zehra had left, and by the light the trembling girl could see that Ben Hamed had just come from without, as he was habited in his walking-dress.

"Zehra," said he, in a stern, threatening tone, "where have you been?"

"In the garden, father," she unhesitatingly answered.

"And what did you there?"

"I walked amid the foliage."

"Were you alone?"

The alcalde bent a searching glance upon the maiden as he spoke, and he took a step nearer to her.

"Were you alone," he repeated.

It was a hard question for Zehra. She knew not how to disobey Ben Hamed, and she knew not how to tell a lie.

"Were you alone?" asked Ben Hamed, for the third time. "No!" trembling uttered Zehra.

"Ha! I saw two men leaving my garden as I came in. Who were they?"

Zehra almost wished now that she had told a lie, for she must either brave the anger of Ben Hamed or betray her lover. The former she feared, but the latter she was de-

terminated not to do. She knew but too well what might be the fate of the young Christian were he discovered in this, and she resolved to keep the secret. She knew not but that she had been discovered in company with the young knight, and therefore she determined to tell of truth what she did tell, and keep the rest to herself.

“Who were those men? I asked.”

“I cannot tell,” returned Zehra, bringing all her fortitude to her assistance.

“Beware, girl. Tell me no falsehoods.”

“I shall tell you none.”

“Then who were those men?”

“I cannot tell.”

“Do you mean that you will not?”

“It cannot matter what I mean else. I cannot tell you.”

“By the holy Prophet, girl, I do not brook your stubborn disobedience. Once more I ask you, who were those men?”

“Ben Hamed, were your dagger at this moment pressed upon my bosom, I should give you no other answer.”

“But you shall answer me—and let me tell you too, that I have mistrusted your fidelity, and that sure measures have been taken against your disobedience. This very week you go to the king.”

If Ben Hamed meant that to have frightened Zehra into a confession, he was greatly mistaken, for it only served to nerve her soul with a stronger resolution.

“Now, Zehra, once more I ask you—who were those men?”

“You have my answer.”

“Now, by Allah, I'll take you at your word,” cried Ben Hamed, in a fury of passion, at the same time grasping the maiden by the shoulder and pointing the dagger to her

heart. "Answer my question, or this sharp steel shall drink your best blood! Answer!"

"Ben Hamed, your weapon frightens me not. Ah, press its point till it feels my heart, if you choose, and while I die I will tell you that it were far preferable to the arms of Mohammed. Strike me, Ben Hamed, but you will get no answer."

The alcalde let his dagger fall upon the floor in utter astoundment. To see the maiden thus was not what he could have believed, and even now he doubted whether she were in her right mind. She that had ever been so coy and mild—so meek and unassuming—to see her thus almost turned the will of Ben Hamed in that it puzzled his brain. He was at fault, for he would no more have dared to harm the person of the maiden than he would have dared to cut off his own right hand.

"Zehra," he asked at length, while he struggled hard to govern his passions, "do you know who those persons were? and were they not with you?"

"Do not question me further, Ben Hamed, for I will not answer. Ay—strike me if you please, I can bear your blows."

Ben Hamed moved slowly back, and his features underwent a dark, lowering change. The passion settled into a demoniac feeling, and as he laid his hand upon the door-knob he turned upon the maiden.

"Keep your secret, but it shall do you no good. Now I *know* who it is that has been within my garden to see you. It is Charles of Leon! But, by Allah, his head shall answer for it!"

Zehra forgot herself. Her woman's heart betrayed her, for as she heard these fearful words she uttered a quick cry, and started toward her guardian.

“ Oh, harm not him ! ” she cried, clasping her hands together.

Ben Hamed smiled a grim smile.

“ I’ve read your secret,” he said, “ what did the Christian dog tell you ? ”

“ Nothing, nothing.”

“ I *know* what he told you ; but he told you a lie ! ”

Zehra started, for there were now marks of fear upon Ben Hamed’s features. His words were stange, and the girl saw that he was powerfully moved by other feelings than those of anger.

“ What—what did he tell you ? ” repeated the alcalde, letting go his hold upon the door and taking a step toward Zehra.

The fair girl hesitated, for her reason once more came to her assistance. She had no doubt but that Ben Hamed was confident that the young Christian had been to see her ; but she knew that the secret of the plans she had that night agreed to was safe. What the alcalde meant she could not divine, though it was evident to her that he alluded to something of moment of which she was ignorant.

“ You need not question me,” the maiden at length answered.

“ Then Charles of Leon dies ! Mark me, girl—Charles of Leon dies ! and you will soon be in the hands of one who has the power to——”

Before Ben Hamed finished the sentence, Zehra had swooned and sank upon the low couch at her feet. The alcalde was alarmed, for he feared that harm might come to her, and in that case he knew that Mohammed would hold him responsible. He sprang to her side, and sinking upon his knees he raised her head to his lap.

“ Are you ill, Zehra ? Speak to me.”

The fair girl opened her eyes, and gazed up into Ben Hamed's face.

"You are not ill?" he uttered, while a ray of hope shot athwart his features. But it was a selfish hope, for its opposite was a fear of the king's wrath, and not a love for the girl. "Speak to me, Zehra. Tell me that you are not ill."

"I shall be better when you are gone."

"But before I go tell me what the Christian said to you," uttered the alcalde, raising Zehra to a sitting posture, and then starting to his feet, a look of relief breaking over his features as he spoke.

"Nothing, nothing," murmured Zehra.

"He did!" cried Ben Hamed, at once moved and blinded by the passion he could not curb. "He told you that you were not my child! But he told you a lie!"

Zehra raised herself to the ottoman that stood near her, and then gazed with a steady, burning look into Ben Hamed's face. She remembered how Charles had started when she spoke to him of doubts, and she now saw more clearly what might be the fears of the man before her, though she was of course deeply puzzled.

"Ben Hamed," she said, "you have premised that the Christian has spoken with me. On that point you must rest upon your own surmises; but let me assure you that the idea of my not being your daughter was never breathed to me by other lips than your own; unless, indeed, the language of my poor old nurse might have been construed into that meaning. But that was years ago, and I have almost lost the things she told me."

"You *are* my child," Ben Hamed said. "Your old nurse never told you that you were not."

"If I am your child, then treat me as such," returned

Zehra, wishing to have the interview closed, and to that end expressing no doubt upon the subject.

“I will treat you as such; and more than that, I will teach you that I am a parent, and a parent's authority shall be over you till you feel the stronger power of your husband. You leave not this room again till you leave it for your home in the Alhambra. Whatever may have passed thus far you may keep to yourself if you choose; but you had better not whisper it to other ears than mine. I will leave you to your rest now, and you may settle the matter with yourself. From this moment a watch is set over you. You will not leave this place till I will it.”

As Ben Hamed ceased speaking he turned and left the apartment. For some time after he had gone Zehra remained upon the low ottoman, but at length she started to her feet.

“Between the Christian knight and Ben Hamed there is some mystery,” she said to herself, as she pressed her hand upon her brow. “Upon my soul's happiness I would stake the belief that Ben Hamed fears Charles of Leon far more than he dares to tell. I saw the movement of fear upon his face when he called that name.”

As the fair girl sank into her own reflections her lips continued to move, but no sound came forth. Suddenly there came upon her features a bright, startling ray of light, and under its impulse she arose from the ottoman and went to a curiously-wrought cabinet that stood in one corner of her apartment. She opened a door, and then drew forth a small drawer, which she took in her hand and carried to where stood the lamp. It was full of trinkets, some of them costly and magnificent, while others were simple and unpretending. She took out, one after another, the articles that lay uppermost, and laid them upon the stand by the side of the lamp. At length she reached the article she

sought. It was a small golden crucifix. As the rays of the lamp fell upon it, its jewels sparkled with exceeding lustre, and for some moments Zehra gazed silently upon it.

"This my nurse gave me, and most assuredly she said it was my mother's," murmured the fair girl. "Yet it is no Moslem bauble. 'Tis the Christian's symbol of the Savior Charles told me of. Was my mother a Christian?"

The words fell trembling from Zehra's lips, and as she pressed the crucifix to her lips, she sank back upon the ottoman and closed her eyes.

"Watch me! watch me!" she said, as she clasped the cross; "but I tell thee, Ben Hamed, you wilt need a thousand eyes to watch me as you wish."

CHAPTER IX.

ABDALLA AGAIN.

"Do you really mean that thing?" uttered Pedro Bambino, regarding his master with wondering looks.

"Upon my faith I do," returned the knight. "I believe I speak the truth."

"Then God bless us. I'll help you to the last drop of blood I've got."

"I don't doubt you, Pedro."

"You have no reason to. But now how shall this thing be done?"

"It's all arranged. Zehra will be ready to accompany us on the fourth night from this. Our horses are fleet enough, and I will see that a third is procured for her."

This conversation was held while the knight and his esquire were returning from their visit to the house of Ben Hamed. They had entered the street that led into the

main portion of the city, and their conversation was dropped.

"Sir Charles, there's somebody watching us from the other side of the street," whispered Pedro.

The knight turned his head, and he could see, beneath the shadow of the high buildings opposite, some one who appeared to be regarding his movements with more than a passing interest. He quickened his pace—and so did the dusky form opposite. He slacked his steps—and so did his *vis-a-vis*.

"He's watching us surely," said Pedro.

"I think I know that form," returned the knight. And as he spoke he stopped.

"—sh!" quickly uttered Pedro. "Are you mad, thus to expose yourself?"

"There's is no danger."

"Yes there is. You don't want to be known in this disguise. Come."

Pedro caught his master by the arm, but he was too late, for the stranger had already started to cross the street.

"Charles of Leon," said the muffled man.

"San Dominic! that Abdalla again, as I'm a Christian man," said Pedro, as he noticed the features of the new comer.

"Abdalla," uttered Charles, "what seek you of me?"

"The Moor's habiliments befit you well," said the Moslem, as he moved nearer to the knight.

"And what of that?"

"O, nothing, save that they have probably *served* you well, too."

"Perhaps they have. At all events, I am freer from impertinent curiosity."

The knight spoke in a bitter tone, but Abdalla seemed not to notice it.

"You are not alone," he said.

"So far as secrets are concerned, myself and esquire are one," returned Charles, guessing at the Moor's meaning.

"Then you have been to the dwelling of Ben Hamed."

Charles of Leon started, and instinctively his hand rested upon his sword-hilt.

"I mean you no harm," quickly added Abdalla, as he noticed the Christian's movement.

"Then why do you seek me? Why dog my steps in this way?"

"Because I have an interest in your movements. They may affect me much. You *have* been to Ben Hamed's."

"Let your assertion be true or false, what matters it?"

"Much to you, and perhaps much to me. Did you see the lady Zehra?"

"To tell you the truth, Moor, I cannot but look upon your questions as impertinent. Why should I tell you what you ask to know?"

"Look ye, Charles of Leon, I know enough of your movements already to send you to the executioner—and let me tell you that our king is not very nice in his distinctions when any one stands in his way. Don't grasp your sword in that fashion, for I can assure you there is no need of it. Now tell me—have you not determined to carry Zehra out from Granada?"

The Christian knight was astounded. If he had looked upon Abdalla before with curiosity, he now regarded him with a sort of fearful wonder.

"Who are you," he uttered, "that would even read my very thoughts?"

"I am nothing but what you see. I am poorer, perhaps, than you imagine, and there is but one man in Granada that dares even call me his friend. One thing more I

will tell you, and that is, if you have occasion to fear for your safety in the city, I am even with you there. Did you know your own vantage you might at this moment place me where Mohammed would find a right speedy death for me. Ah, sir knight, you have nothing to fear from me. Now tell me, have you not found in Zehra one whom you sought?"

Charles gazed upon the Moslem, but he did not speak.

"Answer me that," urged the Moor.

"And wherefore should I?"

"Because if you did not know, I could tell you who and what she is."

"Is she of Moorish blood?"

"No."

"Was she born in Granada?"

"No."

"Then how came she here?"

"She was taken from her father's tent on the bloody field of Almanza."

"And were you there?"

"Yes. That day the Moslem waded deep in his own blood: but the Christian trembled beneath the shock. Yes, I was there, Christian, and I had better have died there. But Allah rules as he pleases, and we must obey."

Even Pedro now began to look upon the Moor with other interest than that of doubt. There was something frank and noble in his manner, and an air of misfortune surrounded him that was not to be mistaken. Charles of Leon hesitated a few moments ere he spoke, but something told him that the Moor might be trusted.

"Since you know so much," he said, "I may tell you what you ask. I *do* mean to carry——"

"—sh?" whispered Pedro, pulling his master by the sleeve.

"Don't fear, Pedro," said Charles, gently removing his esquire's hand; and then turning to the Moor, he continued:

"I *do* mean to carry Zehra away from the power of the Granadan king."

"And you think you will succeed?"

"I do not mean to fail."

"I am sorry for it," uttered the Moor. "The last hope I had is crushed."

"Ah!" pronounced Charles, in a prolonged tone. "Will you betray me?"

"No, no," quickly returned Abdalla; "Allah knows I will not do that. But perhaps you may not succeed after all."

The last part of the Moor's remark was characterized by a sudden lighting up of strange hope.

"I shall certainly try," said the Christian, eyeing his interlocutor with increasing interest.

"Mark me, sir knight," the Moslem said, "I would that the king might drag the maiden to his palace. Start not, for I mean no evil to the fair lady. But let me assure you that Mohammed shall not harm her."

"What mean you by harm?" bitterly cried the young knight. "What greater harm could come to her than that? I tell you she would rather lie down quietly to her death than be the wife of Mohammed."

"You mistake me. She may go to the king's palace and yet not be his wife. Tell me,"—and Abdalla's voice sank to a strange whisper as he spoke—"do you not think she would have the courage to *kill the king*?"

Charles recoiled a step before the burning gaze of the Moor. He began to think him bereft of his senses.

"Think you not she would do it?" repeated Abdalla.

"No. I believe she would not."

“There’s one there who would. The mother of the prince will not see another wife brought to supersede her. Emina has been faithful, and she will not brook the coming of a younger and more beautiful wife. I thank you that you have told me of your plans, for I was anxious to learn of them, and though I can but hope you may not succeed as you have planned, yet I will pray for Zehra’s welfare, and I swear to you that I will not betray you. Our meeting upon the roadside was an accident; but when you told me your name, and when I saw by your escutcheon who you were, I knew the business upon which you had come. Be careful how you conduct that business, for there may be obstacles you will not so easily surmount. This is not the *strange meeting* to which I alluded when last I saw you. That meeting may yet take place.”

At this moment footsteps were heard approaching the spot, and Abdalla quickly recrossed the street, and glided away into the darkness of a narrow passage that led off toward the eastern part of the city. The Christians drew their mantles more closely about them as they noticed strangers coming toward them; but they passed on without stopping.

After Charles reached his hotel, Pedro tried to persuade him that he had done a very foolish thing, but the knight would not own it.

“He’s a spy. I’m sure of it,” said Pedro, with an unusual degree of perseverance.

“I think not,” answered Charles.

“Then who or what is he?”

“I don’t know any more than he told me to-night.”

“And that wasn’t a very clear account, by any means,” said the esquire in a decided tone.

“As clear as could be expected from one in his situation. He evidently has occasion to fear for his own safety.”

“Now don't be offended, sir Charles, if I tell you just what I think.”

“By no means, Pedro—you are privileged,” returned Charles with a smile.

Then you are not so wise as you ought to be. Now just look at your transactions with that Moor. You told him all he wanted to know, and what did you get him in return? Nothing, only that he hoped you would not succeed! You betrayed your every secret to him—gave him full power over you, and in return you don't even know where to look for him. You don't know who he is, what his business is, nor what his character is. You shouldn't have trusted him.”

“What you say is all very well, Pedro, but your conclusions are not warrantable. To be sure I learned but very little of the strange Moslem; but yet I feel sure that he is to be trusted. It is not my disposition to doubt every one I see.”

“Let me tell you, my master, that I have a safe rule for that matter. When I am among friends I doubt not one till he proves himself treacherous; but when I am among enemies I doubt every one whom I do not know.”

“Well, Pedro, your rule is a good one, I must admit; but I will be responsible for all evil results. It is late now.”

Pedro took the hint, and without further remark he turned toward his own room, which was only separated from his master's by a single door; but as he went his countenance showed plainly that he was not at all satisfied with what had transpired.

It cannot be said that the knight himself felt perfectly free from apprehension, and before he retired to his couch he had wished that he had not told to Abdalla all that he had so fully revealed. But it was too late to cherish regrets now.

CHAPTER X.

THE FLIGHT AND THE BATTLE.

ON the next mornig Charles of Leon walked out toward the river Xenil, where he knew there were large pastures, for the purpose of seeking a horse. In the suburbs of the city he found plenty of horse dealers, and ere long he was in full tide of barter. He found a horse that suited him exactly. The animal was an Arabian, delicately built, but yet strong and enduring of muscle. He was of a grayish color, rather lighter than ordinary for such a color, however; and having tried his speed, Charles determined to buy him. The price was exorbitant, but the knight was soon satisfied that the owner meant just what he said, so he drew forth his purse and counted out the sum.

Charles sprang upon the back of his new purchase, and as he rode back to the city he felt perfectly satisfied with his bargain. The animal was kind and easy to manage, and he betrayed no dislike to his change of masters.

The horses were now ready: Charles had matured in his own mind the plans he was to follow, and the hours dragged slowly, heavily away while he waited for the moment that was to place Zehra in his possession.

It was a dark night—dark because it was moonless—but yet not dark enough to be gloomy, for there were stars peeping down upon the earth. Charles of Leon and his esquire rode out from the city to the northward, and at a suitable place, where there grew a thick grove of oaks they

fastened their horses, Pedro having led the third horse by the bridle. The knight was dressed in his full armor of mail, and Pedro was likewise armed as if for battle.

After the horses were secured, Charles and his companion started off on foot, and having retraced their steps a distance of some fifty rods, they turned from the road and took the way toward a grove that lay at the foot of a gentle hill. Here they stopped to await the coming of Zehra, for it was here that she had agreed to meet her lover. It had been her own choice that he should not come to Ben Hamed's garden, for there was danger in such a course, and it could have been no aid to her.

While the knight was thus waiting, the gentle Zehra was preparing to meet him. A watch had been set upon her movements, but she had contrived to outwit her guardian. One of the alcalde's female slaves had been placed to overlook Zehra's motions, but the simple creature now lay as quiet as an infant beneath the effects of a strong sleeping potion, and her young mistress had nothing to fear from her.

Such trinkets as the fair girl wished to retain she had secured, and the jewelled crucifix she had hung about her neck by the small golden chain that was attached to it. A strong cord she had made of her useless garments, and by this she easily let herself down from her window into the garden below. After she was safe upon the ground, she waited a single moment to assure herself that no one was moving near her, and then, drawing her mantle up over her head, she glided swiftly away.

With rapid steps Zehra hastened on. The garden wall offered her no impediment, and she was soon flying along through the gloom far beyond Ben Hamed's grounds. She thought not of the danger she was to meet, but she only thought of the misery she was leaving behind. If she had

a fear, it was that she might not find her lover at his post : but this was soon set at rest ; for as she drew near the grove where she had promised to meet him, she heard her name pronounced by a voice she could not mistake.

“Zehra.”

“It is Zehra,” returned the fugitive, as she sank into the knight’s arm.

“God be praised ! You are not weak, dearest ? ”

“No, no—I am strong.”

“Then let us hasten. Lead the way, Pedro, and have the hores ready.”

As the knight spoke he drew the arm of Zehra within his own and hastened on to the spot where the horses had been left.

“You do not regret this step ? ” he whispered, as he gained the road.

“No—I am happy.”

“You shall always be so.”

“And you shall make me so,” said Zehra.

“Yes, fair girl—ever. O, there’s joy for you in Leon. You shall find friends there you know of. This heart of mine opened for you when first I saw you, but I knew not then how much I might love you—I knew not then how near as well as dear you were.”

“*Near ?* ” repeated Zehra.

“Yes. There’s no Moorish blood in your veins.”

“O, I am sure there is not.”

“Nor is Moslem’s kingdom your home,” said Charles.

“Do you know whence I came ? Do you know where my home of birth is ? ”

“Yes. In Leon. Come—here are the horses.”

“We must make all haste,” said Pedro, as he led out the horse his master had bought for Zehra, “for in less than an hour the moon will be up.”

“And that time shall place us far from here,” returned Charles.

“Come, Zehra, let me assist you to your seat. The animal I have procured is kind, and if necessity calls he can be fleet of foot. There, sit firmly in your place now, and draw the rein without fear.”

“I shall not fail,” returned the fair girl, as she pressed her foot firmly into the stirrup. “The prize to be won will give me new strength.”

“You, Pedro, will ride behind,” said the knight, as he vaulted into his saddle; “and looked well for the approach of danger. Let your ears be open. If we but keep the road, the horses will look out for the stumbling-blocks. Come, my faithful steed, bear me now from danger.”

The noble horse seemed to comprehend his master's words, for he pricked up his ears and pawed eagerly upon the ground. Charles of Leon satisfied himself that Zehra was safely seated, and then he gave the signal for starting.

“Give your horse the reins,” said Zehra, as soon as she found how easily she rode. “Fear not for me. I shall sit firmly.”

The knight could not see the girl's features plainly, but he could tell by her voice that she was anxious to go on as fast as he chose, while the fleet Arabian easily kept close by his side.

The road was good, and though the way was dark, yet the horses sped on without hindrance. In half an hour the Gaudix had been crossed, and as the bridge was cleared, Charles waited for Pedro to come up.

“Ho, Pedro—will we take the way we came?” asked the knight.

There was a road that led directly on to the northward, but it will be remembered that when Charles came to

Granada, he opened upon the river some distance further to the eastward.

"This road will carry us on to Jaen, where we'd better not go," answered Pedro, as he reined up his horse. "Let us take the old route. We can leave El Ajo to the right, and cross the Guadalquiver on the borders of Andalusia."

"Right, Pedro—right. We must reach the stronghold of St. Lorenzo in the morning, and there we shall be safe."

Again the horses were put forward, Pedro falling back into the rear. Charles followed the bank of the river down till he came to the road he sought, and here he turned off. The distance of a mile through a thick wood opened into a wide, cultivated plain, and as they entered upon this the horses were urged somewhat.

"See," said Zehra, as she pointed to where the eastern heavens were growing red, "the moon is rising. We shall soon have a lighter path."

"And yet I should choose a dark one," returned the knight.

"Is that not another wood ahead?" the girl asked, as she saw the dark line that bounded the plain to the northward.

"Yes, and it is the last we shall have to shelter us till we cross the Guadalquiver."

"I think there will be no danger," Zehra said in a hopeful tone.

"Perhaps there may not be. Let your horse have his rein—keep firm in your seat—the way is smooth and clear."

Faster went the lover and his lady over the plain, and half the distance had been passed, when the knight thought he heard a horse coming after him. He turned his head, and ere long Pedro came galloping furiously up.

“On! on!” cried Pedro, as he dashed alongside.
“There are horses in our rear!”

“Pursuers?” uttered Charles.

“Yes—they must be. I heard their horses’ hoofs thundering upon the bridge, and they must have followed us on our route.”

“O, then let us flee!” cried Zehra, in accents of terror.
“I can ride upon the very wind without danger.”

“Then on it is,” shouted the knight, as he sank his spurs into his horse’s flank.

The beast sprang forward, and Zehra’s Arabian kept lightly up. The wood was gained, and its deep shade gave the riders an instinctive feeling of security. Of one thing Charles soon became convinced, and that was, that his own horse was no match for the Arabian. He knew that his faithful charger, though strong and powerful, was going at the top of his speed, while it was evident at a single glance that Zehra’s horse was scarcely straining a muscle. The thought gave him a sudden uneasiness, for he knew that there were many of those lithe-limbed beasts in Granada, and it would be hard to distance them.

When the wood was cleared, the open country beyond was bathed in the moonlight, and for a moment Charles of Leon hesitated.

“On! on!” shouted Pedro. “They have entered the wood.”

The knight had thought of concealment, but the idea passed quickly away.

“They gain upon us,” cried Pedro.

“We can gain the steep pass of El Ajo before they overtake us,” returned the esquire.

“God grant that we may!” uttered Charles. “Fear not, Zehra, we are safe yet.”

The maiden spoke not, but she grasped her rein with a

firmer hold and urged her horse on. She sat like a rock in her seat, with no fear save of those behind her.

"They have cleared the wood," cried Pedro.

Charles turned his head, and he could see the pursuers and he could see their shields, too, as they glistened in the moonlight.

"Can you count them?" he asked of Pedro.

"Yes—there are six of them; but I am sure there were more than six of them crossed the bridge, for I heard their horses' tramp, and there must have been a score of them, at least."

"Cheer up, sweet Zehra," said the young Christian, as he noticed that she trembled. "Six of the Moors are nothing to me, if I can but reach the El Ajo pass. There I would face a score of them."

The pass to which allusion was made was some eight miles distant, and with the hope of reaching it, the knight urged his horse to the top of his speed. Pedro now kept closely behind, and ever and anon he cast his eyes back to see how came on the pursuers. The moon had risen clear and bright, and her round, full face threw down a flood of light upon the plain—a light so glaring that Charles almost fancied the sun had grown crazy, and rushed untimely to his rising. He could see that Zehra looked anxious—that her face was pale, and as he looked upon her he felt his muscles grow stronger and his heart grow bigger with love and daring.

Before two-thirds of the distance to the pass had been gained, the tramp of the pursuing horses could be heard. They sounded fearfully distinct, and Charles could hear how quick they were.

"There are upon us!" uttered Zehra. "O, Heaven save us!"

"There's hope yet, dearest," cried Charles, assuming a

cheerful tone. "If we can but hold out a few minutes longer. I can see the rocky crags now. On, Zehra! O, there's hope yet."

"Heaven defend me!"

"Heaven will aid me, and I will defend you. Fear not while this arm holds its strength."

"And if that arm should fail! O, that would be more dreadful still."

Zehra spoke again, but the clatter of the horses' hoofs drowned her voice.

"On! on! One push more!" shouted Pedro, from behind.

That was given, and the reeking horses entered the pass. It was a narrow path, not over six feet wide, flanked on either side by high and almost perpendicular cliffs, and some hundred feet long. It was a natural notch through a spur of the Alpujarras, and a passage other than through this could not be made except by going six miles further to the westward. The moment that Charles cleared the pass, he reined up his horse and stopped.

"Pedro," he said, "push on with Zehra."

"And you, Sir Charles," uttered the esquire, as he pulled in his horse.

"I will stop and cut off the pursuit. Go, now."

"But I must remain by your side."

"No, no. In God's name I order you to push on. I can hold them all at bay till you have escaped. On! on! Keep the road to Saint Lorenzo, and I will overtake you. Not another word. Go, now. Fear not for me, Zehra. My love for you shall keep me whole. Go with my man, and I will see you again."

"But this is—"

"On, Pedro, and obey me!" shouted the knight, in a tone that was not to be disobeyed. "They are already upon

us. In God's name, on ! If I fall, you will know what to do ; but I will not fail. Sink your rowels deeply in."

It was with a dubious look that Pedro obeyed ; but he knew there was no time for further reply, and he set off.

"God bless you !" uttered Charles, as he pressed the hand of Zehra to his lips. "There—now follow my esquire."

As the maiden's horse dashed off, the pursuers were almost up to the pass. The knight loosened his shield from its rest, and then drawing his trusty sword, he started back again into the narrow notch. On came the Moors, but only two could ride abreast, and even at that they were pinched for room.

"Out of the way !" cried a voice, which Charles at once recognized as the alcalde's. "Back, or I'll ride you down."

"You'll ride down a dead man, then," returned the knight.

"Charles of Leon, by Allah !" exclaimed Ben Hamed. "This for thy carcass, Christian dog !"

Charles slightly backed as the alcalde came furiously on, and the latter received the worst of the shock. The Christian caught the blow of the sword that was aimed at him upon his shield, while his own had only been thrust straight forward, so that Ben Hamed received its point in his side without seeing it. The shock, the glancing of his own weapon from the Christian's shield, and the deep wound in his side, were sufficient to throw the alcalde upon the ground, while Charles allowed the riderless horse to dash on by him.

Pedro had miscounted the pursuers, for Ben Hamed had but four followers ; but it made but little difference, for only two could come forward at a time, and even then at a disadvantage. At the present moment the Moors were

puzzled, for their leader lay directly in their way. Ben Hamed soon gained his feet, but it was only to be knocked down by the horse of one of his own men. He fell upon one side of the pass, however, and the foremost Moor pushed by him. It was not very light in the notch, yet things could be distinctly seen in the outline, and the Christian was prepared for the onset. He met the coming Moor, and at the fourth pass his sword found the Moslem's bosom.

Two of the Moors had dismounted and were dragging their leader out from the pass, while the remaining one saw his companion fall, and then sprang forward to avenge him. Thus did Charles of Leon take his enemies one at a time, and those who knew him would not have wondered that he conquered. His present opposer held him a smart fight, but his good sword failed him not, and ere long the second Moslem lay dead upon the cold, rocky path.

The most severe trial was yet to come, for no sooner had the two Moors seen Ben Hamed safe at the other end of the pass, than they sprang back into their saddles and made at the Christian.

"Give way, dog!" cried one of them.

"Not while I live," returned Charles.

Charles of Leon received both of their blows without harm—one upon his shield and the other upon his mailed shoulder. The Christian had one advantage; his triple mail shielded him against all slashing, cutting blows, while his opponents wore only single breast-plates. The clang of swords was sharp and fierce; once the Christian got a prick in the right thigh, but the man that gave him the thrust fell from his horse on the next moment, with his head half severed from his body.

The remaining Moor soon cried for quarter, and Charles let his point fall.

"Back, then," the Christian cried. "Let fall your sword!"

The Moslem dropped his weapon, and backed quickly from the pass.

"Help me to my horse," faintly groaned Ben Hamed, who had raised himself upon his elbow.

"Help the poor alcalde," said Charles.

"Christian dog!" exclaimed the fallen Moslem, "you have not yet escaped. Vengeance shall yet be mine."

"Rail on, poor fool—then go and find another wife for your king."

The alcalde was lifted to the back of one of the horses, and with much difficulty managed to grasp the reins.

"Don't be too confident," he uttered, at the same time cringing with pain. "You may yet wonder to find who is the fool!"

As the alcalde spoke he made a motion to his companion, who had mounted the horse, and then both started off.

Charles of Leon turned back and instinctively he stopped to gaze upon those whom he had slain. He could just see the glistening of their breast-plates, and he guided his horse carefully over the bodies.

"Does Ben Hamed speak with reason?" he uttered to himself, as he thrust his sword back into its scabbard. "I shall wonder to find who is the fool! By heaven! if there be danger ahead!"

The knight's exclamation was cut short by the clatter of horses' hoofs. He quickly drew his sword again, and with much misgiving he set himself on his guard. It was a single horseman coming from the northward, and as the clatter grew more distinct a variety of fears intruded themselves upon the knight's mind.

CHAPTER XI.

LOST.

CHARLES OF LEON drew further back into the pass as the horseman approached, but ere long he discovered that he had no personal danger to fear, for he recognized in the horseman who was coming toward him his own esquire. This discovery, however, was far from setting the knight's mind at rest.

"Gads my life! Sir Charles, are you safe?" was Pedro's exclamation, as he drew in his rein.

"Yes, yes. But why are you here?"

"To help my master. Eh! what's that in the pass?"

"Three of the Moors are there."

"And where are the other three?"

"There were but two more; you made a mistake in your count. One of them—the alcalde—has gone back to be cured of his bruises, and the other has gone to help him."

"San Dominic, but my master's sword is as good as ever."

"But Zehra—where have you left her?"

"At the edge of the small wood just over yonder hill."

"Pedro, you should not have left her alone."

"But how could I help it? I feared that you might be worsted. I could not rest easy while I knew you were in danger."

"And yet, Pedro, you should not have left Zehra. I told you not to."

"There can be no danger, for I left her in a safe place, and she promised not to move till I returned," urged Pe-

dro, as he noticed that his master was sorely troubled by what had happened.

“You should not have left her.”

“She told me to seek you.”

“And yet you should have known better than to have disobeyed my injunctions,” continued the knight. “If danger comes of this I shall blame you, Pedro. Ben Hamed spoke triumphantly as he rode away, and I think he had reason for it. Those who crossed the bridge, and came not with the alcalde, may have gone another way. Oh, I wished you had kept on! Now haste thee. Sink your rowels deeply.”

Pedro's horse was tired, but yet he galloped off abreast of the knight's beast without faltering.

Charles of Leon was moved by a fearful suspicion as he urged his steed onward. From what Pedro had said he felt sure that more horsemen had crossed the Gaudix bridge than had met him at the El Ajo pass. He knew, too, that there were many paths that led from the road he was on across to the Jaen highway.

“On! on!” he cried, as the fear began to form more tangibly in his mind. “A thousand pistoles if we find her safe. Bear up your horse, Pedro.”

The hill was topped, and Pedro pointed out the wood where he had left Zehra.

“I see her not,” said Charles.

“Because she has hidden among the foliage.”

“But she would surely come forth when she heard our coming.”

Pedro made no reply, for he began to have misgivings in his own mind. At length the wood was reached, and the knight sprang from his horse. He called the name of Zehra, but he gained no answer. He pushed his way among the trees, but he could see no horse—no Zehra. He called

again, and then he listened, but he heard nothing save the sighing of the breeze as it stopped to dally with the aspen leaves that hung above him.

"She's not here," he uttered, as he met Pedro at the further extremity of the copse.

"No," tremblingly returned the esquire, "she may have riddled on."

"She would not have done it alone."

The two men retraced their steps to where the horses stood.

"'Twas here I left her," said Pedro, "and here she promised to remain."

"Oh, if she be lost!"

"Wait, Sir Charles. I will see if I can find the marks of her horse's feet."

As Pedro spoke he sprang to the edge of the wood and sank upon his hands and knees.

"Here are the tracks," he said, as he moved along in a northerly direction. "And here she stopped," he continued, as he had moved along some two rods. "San Jago! but here's another!"

"Another what?" cried Charles, springing to the spot.

"The tracks of another horse. And another, too? And yet another! Oh, do not curse me, my master—do not. But she's gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Charles, in tones of such keen anguish that his esquire started with new affright. "God defend me."

"Oh, forgive me, Sir Charles—forgive me!" Pedro cried, as he sank upon his knees again and clasped his hands.

"I know you meant me well, Pedro."

"Yes. It was my love for you that overcame my judgment."

"I forgive you, Pedro. And now let us——"

"God of heaven! What was that?"

As the esquire uttered this exclamation the knight's noble steed reared with a loud snort, and then with one fearful plunge he sank quivering upon the turf. Charles sprang to the side of his horse, and found that a javelin had pierced his neck in an angular direction and entered the vitals.

"We are surrounded!" shouted Pedro. "Mount my horse and flee."

Charles of Leon made no reply, but drawing his sword he turned toward the direction from whence the javelin must have been thrown, and he saw a man at a short distance off, while several horsemen were coming around the eastern sweep of the hill he had passed. There were nearly a score of them soon in sight, and he who had thrown the javelin called loudly for them to hasten up.

"Mount my horse and flee," cried Pedro. "We can not give them battle."

"One of us must be left to fight," calmly returned the knight.

"Will you not mount?"

"No."

"Then I will. Don't fight them, Sir Charles, but surrender."

As Pedro spoke he leaped into his saddle, and putting spurs to his horse he dashed off through the little wood.

The Moors leaped their horses into the road a moment afterward, and surrounded the Christian knight.

"Never mind the servant," cried one who seemed to be the Moslem leader. "Let him go. This is the man we want. Surrender, thou Christian dog! Down with that sword of thine!"

Charles of Leon hesitated. His sword was anxious for

work, but the odds were too fearful. He on foot against a score of armed men and mounted—it was madness. With a heavy heart he thrust his sword back into its scabbard, and folded his arms across his breast.

“Where is the maiden?” he instinctively asked, as half a dozen of the Moors laid their hands on him.

“She is safe. By Allah, but you must have thought Granada a city of dolts, if you expected to get clear with such a prize.”

Charles felt sure that Zehra was in custody, and he felt for the time that he would rather be a prisoner than be free. With the hope that ardent desire sometimes inspires, the Christian looked ahead to victory yet. The light of his vision must have been an emanation from his own imagination, for no circumstances about him could have aided him to his hope.

After the knight's hands had been secured, a horse was led up on which to mount him, and at the first glance he recognized the light Arabian he had bought for Zehra. He was placed upon the animal's back, then secured in his seat, and in a few moments more the whole party were mounted. Several of the Moors still persisted in pursuing Pedro, but their leader said no.

“Let the coward go; we want nothing of him worth the trouble of getting him. By my faith, Sir Christian, your man shows but little love for you, thus to gallop off and leave you alone.”

Charles remained silent beneath the taunt, for he could not help the thinking for himself that Pedro had acted the coward. But other thoughts of more moment forced themselves on the mind, and he grew more dejected.

It was evident to our hero that the party that had captured him had kept the Jean road from the bridge, and crossed over beyond the wood to the way they were now in.

This had been his fear when he met Pedro at the El Ajo pass.

The Moors, with their prisoner, passed over the hill and took their way back as Charles had come. At the top of the elevation the knight looked down, and at the foot he saw a small party of horsemen waiting. With one of them he saw a female. He knew it was Zehra, and at that moment he would have drawn his sword against the host that surrounded him, but the bands pressed hard upon his wrists, and he could only groan in his anguish.

When the captors of the knight reached the foot of the hill, their leader called for the other party—only three in number—to ride on ahead. Charles could see Zehra's pale features, and from the manner in which she reclined upon the stout form of the man with whom she rode she seemed to have fainted.

"By the great God of heaven, Granada shall tremble for this!" uttered Charles, as Zehra was lost to his sight.

The Moslem leader only laughed.

"Your city shall smoke in ruins, and your blood shall flow like water."

"Will you do all this!"

"Leon and Castile shall do it."

"*You* will not tell them the tale!" said the Moor.

Charles knew the meaning of these words, but he felt not the dread that might have been expected, for he could not believe that Mohammed would dare to kill him. He did not know the Moslem king.

When those who rode ahead reached the El Ajo pass they stopped. The others soon came up, and not a little astonishment was expressed at the sight of the three dead Moors.

"What is this?" cried the chief, as he bent over his saddle-bow and gazed down upon the corpses.

“That is the mark of my hand,” said Charles.

“But Ben Hamed is not here.”

“No—I sent him back to Granada to get back the blood he lost. I gave him his pitiful life, and I spared him a companion, too.”

The Moor gazed a moment into the face of the Christian, and then he said, while he gathered his reins :

“The vultures of Alpujarras shall have one meal from Christian flesh !”

Charles of Leon shuddered, but soon he was calm again, and defiance rested on his brow.

The Moslem dead were left where they lay, and again the party set forward. Zehra was borne on in advance, as before, while the Christian knight was surrounded more closely by his captors.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MEETING IN PRISON.

“THERE’S more in your bosom than you will confess, but, by Allah, it shall be dragged from you !”

This was spoken by Mohammed, as the Christian knight of Leon stood bound before him. At a short distance Ben Hamed stood, supported by two attendants. He was weak from pain and the loss of blood, but his soul seemed strong with deadly passion.

“You had better beware how you carry out your threats,” was the Christian’s answer. “I have nothing to tell you save that which you know.”

“And I know enough to cause the death of a score like you. By the sword of the Prophet, Christian cur, your head is not worth the half of revenge I owe you. Three of

my knights lie dead by your hand, and you would have snatched away my bride. Away with him to prison ! ”

“ Not yet, sire,” interposed Ben Hamed. “ Let the dog die now.”

“ Away with him to prison. He shall die soon enough.”

“ Let it be now,” urged the alcalde. “ He is dangerous while alive.”

“ No,” thundered the king, springing from his seat and striking his hands together. “ His death shall grace my nuptial day and then your fair daughter shall see his gory head ! I’ll make her a present of it, and if she loves him as she seems, ’twill be a right glorious nuptial present. Away with him, and bid Tarik that he look well to his safety.”

The chords that bound the Christian knight were strong, but they came nigh bursting while the king spoke. The young man felt his temples throb and his throat swell, but he had no power of utterance. The king’s officers took him by the arm to lead him away, and without a word he turned from the royal presence.

In an hour from that time Charles of Leon was delivered up at the prison of Granada. Tarik, the jailor, received him from the hands of the officers and took him away. It was not a subterranean dungeon to which Charles was conducted, but a strong, vaulted room on the second floor of the prison. The walls were of solid stone—so were the floor and the vaulted roof. It was early morning and the light came in through a small loop-hole situated some eight feet from the floor.

In the centre of the room there was a stone bench, and near it a stout iron bolt. An attendant had followed Tarik with chains, and ere long our hero was so securely fastened by a shackle upon each ankle, to which was affixed a chain that was bolted to the ring in the pavement. Manacles

were placed upon the knight's wrists, and when all was completed Tarik sent his assistant away.

"You've fallen into rough hands, sir knight," said the jailor, as he arose from his work.

Charles looked upon the stout form of the old man—for the jailor was old—and a painful shadow flitted across his face.

"I do not mean that I am rough," Tarik added, "though my calling is not by any means a gentle one; but I think the king means you little good."

"The king will not dare to take my life," uttered the knight.

"Don't be too sure of that. I have had younger men than yourself come here by the king's orders, and——"

"Go on," said Charles.

"They never went forth to the world again."

The young Christian shuddered.

"My orders with regard to yourself are not very strict, save that my own life is in peril for your safe keeping. If you want any delicacies, and have the means to purchase them, you can be gratified."

"I am thankful for your kindness, but I know of nothing now that I wish which it is in your power to give."

"How is it with your food?"

"Give me the best you can. I have money to pay for it. I may not have long to live, but let me live well while life lasts."

"You shall be gratified," said Tarik, and then he turned and left the room, locking the heavy door after him.

Charles of Leon was alone in a Moorish prison! The dread sentence of death, pronounced by a remorseless tyrant, hung over him! A stout heart can be made to tremble in chains, and a proud spirit can be quailed in a strong dungeon. What ray of hope was there for the Christian?

Only such as every strong man feels while life lasts—a hope in *chance*. Of one thing Charles felt assured; and that was, that the jailor was a kind-hearted man, and this single circumstance gave him some balm for his misery.

The day passed, and Charles had food brought to him twice. It was of a quality as he could have desired, though the man who brought it had no word to say with regard to payment.

On the next morning, as Charles of Leon was eating the meal that had been brought to him, the door of his prison was opened.

“Go in,” said Tarik, “but remember you will only have half an hour.”

Charles looked up as a stranger entered the cell.

“Charles of Leon, this is a strange meeting.”

“Abdalla!” uttered the knight, rising to his feet.

“Yes, Christian, you see me now as I feared we both should be. These irons are less heavy than stout armor, but not so beautiful to the eye.”

The Moor was manacled and his ankles were chained together, but yet he could shuffle along very slowly without much difficulty.

“What brings you here?” asked Charles.

“The same that brought you here—the king.”

“But wherefore?”

“That I cannot so readily tell. Officers have been watching me for a long time. Perhaps Mohammed fears me.”

“When were you brought?”

“Do you remember when last I saw you in the street?”

“Yes?”

“Before the sun rose again I was a prisoner.”

“But have you committed no crime?”

“Not more than you have.”

"You are a rebel, perhaps."

"Aha! Yes—I have rebelled, and there's rebellion in my heart now. But tell me of Zehra. Is she in the power of Mohammed?"

Charles started, and raised his manacled hands to his brow.

"Yes, yes," he uttered, as he sank down upon his seat.

"Not in the palace yet? Not yet his wife?" cried Abdalla.

"No; but yet in his power. Ben Hamed keeps her yet."

"When will Mohammed take her to himself?"

The knight gazed sadly up into the Moor's face; his lip quivered as he replied:

"I only know that on the day that sees Zehra the wife of Mohammed I am to die."

"Ah!"

"Yes. So the king hath said."

For some moments Abdalla stood in a thoughtful silence, and Charles could see that there was painful thought at work in his bosom. At length he said:

"If you die not till then, I fear you will suffer more than death."

The knight looked puzzled.

"In such a case," continued the Moor, "I think you will be doomed to drag out an eternal existence on this weary earth."

"What meaning have you now?" Charles exclaimed, springing again to his feet, and reaching his hand toward the Moor.

"My meaning is plain," returned Abdalla. "Zehra is not likely to become the wife of the king. Do not look surprised. I sought you now to know if she had been brought back, and though you tell me she has, and that

Mohammed means to make her his wife, yet I feel assured that such will never be the case. I think the maiden herself will resist, and I know that Emina will not be easily overcome."

"It can make but little difference to me," said Charles.

"Of course I could die happier if I knew that Zehra would be free from the tyrant's power; but I must die at all events."

"You are not dead yet, and something tells me that if you die by Mohammed's hand, I shall keep you company. Yet I have a hope of life, and the same ground that founds my hope may found a ground for you."

The Christian knight looked into the face of the Moor, and the more he looked the more he became puzzled. For the time he forgot the prison he was in, and the doom that hung over him.

"Abdalla," he said, as he once more sat down upon his stone bench, "tell me who and what you are."

"I am a prisoner like yourself."

"But I would know more than that."

"I have no more to tell."

"You trifle with me."

"I should trifle with myself, were I to tell you more. I am under knightly oath to keep all you have not already heard."

"Then tell me the ground of your hope of escape."

"Even there you must let me hope for you. Think me not unkind, Charles of Leon, but I cannot tell you more. 'Tis strange our destinies should thus run together. You a Christian—and I a Moor. Yet, sir knight, that gentle maiden—the fair Zehra—unwittingly holds both our destinies in her hands."

"Hold, Moor," uttered Charles, as Abdalla moved as if to turn away, "you are some kin of Zehra's."

"She is a Christian by birth."

"I know it."

"I am a Moor."

Charles of Leon looked half doubtingly upon his companion.

"What part of my assertion puzzles you?" asked Abdalla, with a smile.

"That you are a Moor."

"Ah! And where runs your suspicions now?"

"I know not, but yet I doubt if you be a Moor."

"Do not my form and features show it?"

"Forms and features are accommodating."

"But my complexion."

"I have seen you disguised."

"That was to escape detection. I, too, have seen you disguised."

"Only in garb."

Abdalla smiled.

At this moment Tarik opened the door.

"Abdalla, your time is up."

"Take courage," whispered the Moor. "If I live you shall live, too—provided Mohammed does not change his mind and put you to the block before his marriage."

"Come," repeated Tarik.

Again Charles of Leon was left alone; but he had more food for reflection than before. He did really doubt whether the strange man who had just left him was a Moor. But what that doubt entertained he was no nearer to a solution than before. He had only tangled the intricate web into a knot more tenacious than ever, and he had to satisfy himself to let circumstances untie it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEART'S SACRIFICE.

DAYS had been passing away, and a week had elapsed since Zehra was arrested in her flight and brought back to the house of Ben Hamed. She had been sick, very sick, and at times she had almost lost herself in the delirium of her misery and disappointment. It was well for the maiden that she had seen one whom she had really loved, or her own hand might have put a stop to the tide of earthly affairs; but the love that had been kindled in her bosom had left a spark of light, so the darkness was not so utter as before. That generous spark gave her life, and while all else of earth was gloomy and unpromising, she could turn to that and feel that even for her there might be somewhat of joy—joy in memory if in nothing else. She had loved, and she had been loved in return. Her heart had entered upon its gentle mission, the flowers of her soul's affections had richly blossomed, and though they might now be crushed by the foot of tyranny, yet they shed a fragrance for her. Her sorrow was as deep as before, but not so bitter; she had a joy mingled in her life-cup.

Ben Hamed entered her room and ordered the attendant to withdraw. He was still weak from the effects of the wounds he had received at the hands of the Christian knight, and his countenance showed that he had endured much suffering.

“Zehra,” he said, as he sank down upon the ottoman, “your strange freak of disobedience had well nigh caused the death of both of us; but I can almost forgive you since I know that the Christian seduced you away.”

“Lay not the charge to him,” uttered the maiden, with much energy. “It was no work of his. If you would attach blame to the act, then know that the blame is mine. Charles of Leon would only have saved me——”

“Stop, Zehra. Let not the king hear you speak thus, for I have assured him that by false words and foul devices the Christian did beguile thee. The king is willing to believe this out of his love for thee, and woe be to you and me if he learns to the contrary.”

“Why should you tell Mohammed this?”

“For your own good. You are not yet wholly lost, for the king can yet be kind to thee, if you but cross him not again; and he believes not that you have been willingly false to him.”

“False to *him*! O, wretchedness! Why not accuse me of being false to Mahound’s satan!”

Ben Hamed started back aghast.

“Zehra,” he said, “your brain is turned. This speech comes not from thyself.”

“It comes from what you have made me. I mean no disrespect to the prophet.”

“But you mean disrespect to the king.”

“Yes; for I loathe him.”

“Let him not know of it. Beware how you breathe such a thought of him. He will not brook it. O, curse the day that brought the Christian dog to Granada. But he shall rue it, though.”

“You would not dare to harm him.”

“Whom?”

“Charles of Leon.”

“Not dare? He dies the death!”

“O, no! no!”

“He does.”

“No! no! He shall not die!”

"Mohammed has sworn it."

Zehra started to her feet, and gazed wildly into Ben Hamed's face.

"Do you mean this thing?" she uttered, in a hoarse whisper. "Do you mean that the king will kill Charles of Leon?"

"Yes."

"Then listen." The maiden raised herself to her full height, and gazed steadily upon the alcalde. Her eyes burned with an intense fire, and her every feature told of the fearful struggle that was working within. "Listen," she said. "If Charles of Leon dies by order of the king, then I, too, will bid farewell to earth! Tell the king this; and tell him, too, that Zehra will not fail in her promise."

Ben Hamed was awe-struck by the appearance of the noble-hearted girl. He could not comprehend the soul that gave birth to such a spirit, but yet he could not entirely escape its magic power.

"You are surely wild," he at length said; but he spoke half unconsciously as he still gazed upon the girl.

"I am calm, Ben Hamed—calm. As calm as the fearful stillness that follows the dread quaking of earth after cities have been swallowed up by the gaping fiend!"

Ben Hamed instinctively moved further away from the speaker. Her eyes seemed to burn him, and he trembled as he met her look.

"Go tell this to Mohammed; and then tell him that his people will love him better when they have gazed upon the cold corpses of his victims."

"Hush, my child. Go seek your rest. Your sufferings have made you mad. Mohammed shall wait till you are better. Go to your couch."

"Ben Hamed, you mistake me. I am not mad, but I speak soberly, and as I feel."

“Hush. Sit down, Zehra. I know you are wild and unconscious. You will be better ere long.”

“Ah, sir, you know me not. There is no frenzy here—naught but earnest truth.”

“I’ll not believe it. You would not throw away your life. It is not natural for one to whom the future holds out such inducements.”

Zehra covered her face with her hands, and sank back upon her seat. She knew that she could die with her Christian lover; but when the thought came upon her of how much happier she could be to live with him on earth, she felt a degree of sadness that overcame her.

“I will tell Mohammed to wait,” added Ben Hamed. “I will tell him that you are ill.”

“Wait!” repeated Zehra.

“Yes, for he is anxious about you.”

“And how is he anxious?” the maiden asked, in a low, whispering tone.

“For your welfare.”

“He wants me at the Alhambra.”

“Yes, as soon as you are well.”

“Then Heaven grant that health may never know me again on earth.”

“That is a foolish prayer, for you are nearly well now.”

“And Mohammed means to make me his wife as soon as possible?”

“Yes. Your own conduct has made him so resolve.”

“Ben Hamed,” asked Zehra, in a deep, nervous whisper, “when does the king mean to put the Christian to death?”

“Not until after his nuptials.”

“Are you sure of this?”

The alcalde hesitated. Thought flashed upon him that

he might now deceive Zehra, and bend her more easily to his wishes.

"I will tell you a secret, Zehra. The king will hold Charles of Leon until you are his wife, and then, if you please him by your conduct, he will let the Christian go; but if you are stubborn the knight dies."

"You are deceiving me."

"No. In truth I am not. Such is the king's determination. So it lays in your power to destroy or free the Christian."

Zehra looked earnestly upon Ben Hamed, but she could read nothing in his countenance. The thing was not impossible, and she could not think that, with all his hardness of heart, the alcalde would lie to her in this.

"I would not hasten you beyond your strength," continued Ben Hamed, with consummate art, "but the king is anxious, and though his anger toward the Christian may slumber now, it only slumbers beneath the power of his love for you. Should he find you obstinate, you know what would be the result. This is the truth. Your own heart must guide you now. If the Christian is an innocent man, it lies in your power to save him. But I need tell you no more."

"When does Mohammed wish me for his wife?"

"Now—as soon as possible."

"And the Christian, where is he?"

"In prison."

"O, if you deceive me in this, may the pains of torture be ever yours. May you never again know rest or taste the sweets of life."

"I cannot deceive you thus."

Ben Hamed spoke with a steady, firm voice, though his eyes fell beneath the gaze of the being he was deceiving.

“ I will go ! ”

Zehra spoke and sank back upon her couch. Those simple words had required the whole power of her soul in their utterance, and when they were spoken she could say no more. Ben Hamed stood over her and assured her that she should not go until she was wholly recovered ; but she heeded him not. He spoke words that he meant for comfort, but she knew not what he said. He asked her to be calm, but she answered only with tears and groans.

When Zehra was alone she arose to her feet and pressed her hands upon her bosom. Her face was white as marble, and even the veins seemed to have lost their purple flood.

“ O, Charles of Leon, to save thee I will make the sacrifice. I will not die. I will live ; and even while I feel the serpent coil his loathsome folds about me I will be happy with the thought that I am saving thee. O, 'tis a cruel fate for us both ; but thou shalt live, and I will joy in thy freedom. We may never meet again but in heaven.”

The unhappy girl's hands fell to her side, and then, as they convulsively met upon her marble brow, she sank down upon the ottoman where Ben Hamed had sat, and she murmured the name of him she would save.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR EXCHANGE.

THE knight of Leon had seen a week of dull monotony in his Granadan prison. He had asked the man who brought him his food how long he was to remain there, and he had asked Tarik, too, but he gained no answer to his inquiry save that of ignorance.

Tarik was sitting alone in his office, a small room in the lower story of the prison, early in the morning, when he was awakened from his meditations by the entrance of an old dervish. The old man's brow was wrinkled and weather-beaten, and his unshorn face bore a wild luxuriance of white beard. He stooped in his gait, and his trembling hands bore a steel-pointed staff, with which he aided his weak steps.

"A blessing upon thee, son!" pronounced the dervish, as he leaned heavily upon his staff.

"I thank thee," returned Tarik, with a feeling of reverence.

"Jailor, you have a prisoner here whom I would see."

"His name?"

"He is a Christian, but I know not his name, nor do I know whence he comes; but I hear he is a brave man, and one well read in the science of the world. Such a Christian I have longed to see. I would converse with him upon his religion."

"And suppose he should make a Christian of you?"

"Allah forbid!" uttered the dervish, with holy horror.

"I will sooner bring him to the fold of the faithful."

"I know not that I should do wrong to let you go to him."

"Allah forbid that you should overstep your duty at my behest. If it would be wrong, let me go unsatisfied away; but if it would be right, I would see him. Perhaps 'tis not his fault that he is an infidel, and glory be to Allah and his Prophet if one like him shall be converted. Shall I go?"

"I cannot refuse you."

"Thanks, good jailor."

"Give me your arm and I will lead you."

"No. Lead the way and I will follow. Old age has

not yet unmanned me, though the hand of time bears heavily upon me."

Tarik looked kindly upon the old man, and turning toward a heavy door that opened into the prison he bade him follow.

"Whence comes the Christian?" asked the dervish, as he worked his way slowly up the stone stairs that led to the second story of the prison.

"From Leon," returned Tarik.

"And his name?"

"Charles, Count of Valladolid."

"A goodly title he hath. Is he so brave as I have heard?"

"Too brave to be at large in Granada. Here is the door. Go in, and I will call for you when your stay has been reasonable."

Tarik opened the door as he spoke, and merely looking in to see that all was right, he closed it again after the dervish had passed through.

Charles looked up, and he wondered as he saw his strange visitor.

"Allah bless and serve thee!" uttered the dervish.

The knight made no reply.

"They tell me thou art a brave knight. Ah, I see the fire in thine eyes now. I have come to save thee."

"To save me!" echoed Charles, starting up from his seat.

"From the pains of the unbeliever in the world to come. I will teach thee of our Holy Prophet."

"Cease, old man. Go your way," said the knight, sinking back upon his seat. "I want none of your religion. I have already seen enough of it to make me loathe it. It may do for those whose minds can never get above the trash of selfishness, but I want none of it."

“Bravely spoken! By San Dominic, Sir Charles, but you speak wonderful well.”

“Pedro!” uttered the knight, starting to his feet, while his heart leaped wildly in his bosom.

“Pedro Bambino, at your service,” returned the faithful esquire, as he shook himself out of his bent position and cut a variety of fantastic movements.

“God bless thee! I would press thee to my bosom, but you see I cannot. I had mistaken you, Pedro; for I suspected you of cowardice.”

“No, no—there is none of that in Pedro Bambino. I saw the state of things, and knew I could be of more use to you as I now am than were I lodged in prison.”

“I see it all now. But your disguise, my faithful fellow; how gained you such a victory over yourself?”

“This dress—this beard—this staff, and a judicious touch of paint by way of wrinkles, did it all. But there is no time to lose. It will all fit you.”

“Fit me, Pedro?”

“Yes; and I have paint, too, for the wrinkles.”

“Do you mean that you have come to change places with me?”

“Most assuredly. For what else should I come? You shall go and I will stay.”

“No, Pedro—I cannot do that.”

“But you must.”

“I cannot. I love you for your kindness, but I cannot accept the sacrifice you would make.”

“Nonsense! Do you know that they mean to kill you?”

“So they have threatened, but I do not believe they will dare to do it.”

“Let your mind be easy on that point, for I know they will dare to do it, and I think they have set a no very dis-

tant day for the deed. You have commanded me as you pleased, and I have obeyed ; now I am going to command, and you must obey."

"Do you suppose, Pedro, that I should feel a man among men were I to let you die for me? How should I tell the tale—that I feared a death that you boldly met for me?"

"No, no; they will not kill me. I am not afraid to die; but I know I shall not die if you leave me here. It is not me they want."

"Nevertheless they will be revenged on you, if they find you here."

"No; I will tell them such a story as will prevent it. I will tell them that you made me do this; that I only came to bid you farewell, and that you made me stop in your place."

"Ah, that would be a flimsy tale."

"Then I will tell them something else. At any rate, you know I shall stand a better chance than you will, for you the king has determined to kill."

"No, Pedro."

"Remember your friends in happy Leon; remember that old woman whom you call mother, and that bright-eyed, happy creature who calls you brother; and remember——"

"Stop, Pedro."

"Remember the sweet maid the Moors tore from you."

"She is lost."

"Not yet, my master. She is not yet with the king; but she will be if you remain here."

"I ought not to leave you here."

"Every principle of right and duty tells to the contrary. Zehra is yet with Ben Hamed; she has been sick. The king only awaits her recovery. Come, my master."

"But my irons."

"I have the means to cast them off. Come, hasten, before the jailor returns."

"Can I do this?"

"Shall I go alone to Leon and tell your poor old mother—"

"Stop, stop, Pedro. You have conquered. I will obey you."

"Bless you, bless you, my master. I am happy now."

As the faithful man thus spoke, he threw his arms about the neck of the knight and blessed him again.

"Let us haste, now," he uttered, as he drew forth a small package from his bosom. "There is no time to lose."

Pedro had provided himself with all the necessary implements for the accomplishment he had in view, and he set to work upon his master's irons in a manner that proved him to understand the business. The manacles were first taken from the wrists, and then the shackles fell from the feet. Nothing was broken, but the parts were all left so that they could be put together again as before.

"Now for a change of dress," said the honest esquire. "Haste thee, my master! San Jago, but the dervish will become you well."

Charles of Leon proceeded to divest himself of his garments, but it was done with a slowness that showed he was not wholly satisfied to leave his servant behind.

"My garments will be too long for you, Pedro."

"No; I shall sit me quietly down when the jailor comes."

"But Tarik will notice that I am taller than you were."

"No, he won't. You can bend yourself up till you will be as short as I was. Here, on with this gown. There! You look like another person already. Now for this wig and beard, and then I'll paint the wrinkles for you."

As soon as the knight was thus metamorphosed, Pedro drew a piece of paint and a pencil from his bosom, and placed the age marks upon his master's brow in such a manner as to defy detection except upon the closest scrutiny. When this was done he called for the knight to help him on with the irons.

"Oh, Pedro, I cannot do this," uttered Charles, as he lifted the heavy shackles in his hand. "Give me back my dress and I will myself remain."

"Help me on with the irons, I say. This is no time for dallying. The jailor may come and find us in the midst of our work, and then we should both be in for it. Quick, Sir Charles; there is no time to lose."

The knight obeyed, but it was reluctantly. Pedro, however, was all assurance. He showed no fear, but seemed to be made really happy by what he was doing.

"There; now all is done," said he, as he rattled his chains and sat down upon the stone bench. "San Dominic, Sir Charles, but these fit me better than they did you; and you make a graver looking dervish than I did; upon my faith you do."

Charles gazed into the face of his esquire with a look of tearful gratitude, but he was too full of feeling to speak.

"Do not fear for me," Pedro continued. "I feel sure that no harm will come to me. Some way will be opened for my escape from this place."

"I fear that is beyond hope, Pedro."

"I think not. I have all the implements necessary to freeing myself, and I marked well the walls as I came in. Tarik places more confidence upon these stout irons than he does upon the security of his dungeons; and well he may, for no one, unaided, could overcome them. Now, if you get clear, which way shall you move?"

"I know not."

“Let it be directly for saint Lorenzo, and if I escape I will join you there.”

“But Zehra! I cannot leave her, Pedro.”

“She is now beyond our reach. For life’s sake, Sir Charles, do not think of escaping with her. I know your feelings, but something must be sacrificed. If you make an attempt to reach her it may be the worse for both of you.”

“Oh, I cannot leave her, Pedro.”

“But you must. Do not throw away the life you may gain.”

“Heaven knows I should almost——”

“Hush! Here comes the jailor. Now on to Saint Lorenzo. Wait for me there, and perhaps I may overtake you. There, God bless you, my master, and if we never meet again, you will not forget poor Pedro Bambino.”

Charles of Leon pressed the hand of his faithful servant, but tears alone spoke his thoughts.

“Mind and let your voice tremble as mine did. — Bear up, now. Courage.”

The door opened as Pedro spoke, and Tarik entered.

“Yes,” returned Charles.

“I can almost love your Prophet; but yet I think I shall die a Christian,” said Pedro, imitating the voice of his master.

Charles of Leon placed his trembling hand upon the head of his follower, and there it rested for a single moment. Then he turned silently away, and bending low down, as if with physical infirmities, he followed Tarik from the dungeon.

In the office the dervish was requested to sit down and rest, but he declined. Tarik looked into his face, but he never mistrusted that his prisoner was hidden beneath that garb. Charles felt a new confidence as he saw that he

passed so easily, and with a kind blessing upon the jailor, he stepped into the street.

For several moments the knight stood and reflected upon the course he should pursue. His heart turned toward the dwelling of Ben Hamed, but his head said "Saint Lorenzo." When he moved on, however, it was toward the Darro, but he had decided upon no ultimate course.

CHAPTER XV.

THINGS LOOK DARK.

"WELL," uttered Pedro Bambino, as soon as he was safely alone, "here I am. I know my master well. Now, had I told him *I* meant to have escaped when first I entered, he wouldn't have given up his chains. No; he'd have wanted my tools to make his own escape; but I knew him better. Sir Charles is a wonderful man with open fight, but he's too hot by far for scheming. Now let us look. San Dominic, I think that hole will let this body of mine easily through if I can but get that bar out of the way. But easy, Pedro, you've been in prison before this. The Frenchman makes stronger places than this, but I've seen you make your way through them ere this. It must be a strong place that holds Pedro Bambino against his will."

The day passed slowly away; dinner and supper were brought to the prisoner, but the exchange that had taken place was not noticed. As soon as it was dark Pedro commenced his operations. The irons he easily removed from his feet and hands, and then he produced a simple apparatus by which he struck a light on the prepared wick of a small waxen taper. From the bundle he had concealed in his bosom he drew forth a variety of implements that were the inventions of his own genius.

First he produced a stout steel hook, or "crow-bill," to which was affixed a long wire that was worked into loops at short distances apart. This hook Pedro skillfully threw over the sill of the small window, and it fixed itself securely on the outer corner of the stone. He then produced a sharp, small, file-like saw, and after some perseverance he succeeded in removing the iron bar. The way was now open, and gathering his implements together, Pedro tied them up and placed them in his bosom, all excepting the hook and looped wire.

Beneath the dervish's garb the esquire had worn a scanty Moorish costume—a sort of harlequin's dress—and ere he left the cell he threw off the clothing of his master. Then he blew out his taper and ascended to the sill of the window. He listened, but he heard no sound of any one below, and removing his hook from the opposite side of the sill he let the wire fall upon the outside, and then descended to the basement of the prison yard. His hook he then jerked away from its hold, and by its means he scaled the outer wall. No sentry interrupted him, nor did he see anyone on his way. As he found himself safe without the prison walls he folded his simple wire ladder together, and then moved quickly away.

"Free! free!" ejaculated Pedro, as he got at a respectable distance from the Moorish prison. "Now God grant that I may overtake my master. I do not think he would have remained in the city."

Thus murmuring to himself, Pedro made his way toward the northern gates. No objection was made to his passing out, and his heart was lighter when he found himself without the city; but he felt not safe while within sight of the Moorish capital, and with eager steps he hastened on. Before midnight he reached the Gaudix bridge, and as he crossed over he stopped a moment to study upon his course.

"The Jaen road is the shortest—the El Ajo the safest. I think Sir Charles would have taken the latter."

"Pedro," spoke a voice that seemed to come from a clump of low mulberries near the river.

"San Jago!" uttered the esquire.

"No, it's your master, good Pedro."

In a moment more Charles of Leon stepped forth. He still wore the dervish's dress, but he stood upright in it. It was too dark to distinguish countenances, but between the master and man there could be no mistake.

"God be praised that I find you safe, at all events," fervently ejaculated Pedro. "But why are you no further than this?"

"Ah, Pedro, 'tis hard for me to leave Granada, even now; but while you were behind, the thing seemed impossible. Never was mortal so lonely as I have been to-day. It seemed as though the earth itself had deserted me."

"Well, we are together now; and now let us hasten on."

"Pedro, I cannot go."

"And why not?"

"Zehra."

"You know that is impossible."

"But upon my knightly oath did I swear to bring her out of Granada."

"And yet you know you cannot. Why throw away your life for nothing?"

"You may go on, Pedro; but I must return. I got as far as here; but here my heart smote me and I stopped. Zehra is suffering, and I may yet save her. The thing is not impossible. Go on, Pedro, but I cannot."

The honest esquire was puzzled and deeply annoyed.

"You will go with me," he said at length.

"No; I shall return to Granada."

“Then, Sir Charles, I shall bear you company.”

“But suppose I should forbid it?”

“Then I shall disobey you.”

The knight was silent.

“Listen to me for a moment, Sir Charles,” continued Pedro. “It is madness for you to think of this thing. You have done all that man could do, and more than many would have done; and for the present you must rest where you are. What would you do to return to the city now? That dress you wear will betray you in a moment. You can gain none other, for ere morning the news will be out of your escape. There is not an eye in Granada that would not recognize you. Your first step within the gates of the city would be a signal for your arrest. And what can you do for Zehra? Look at it, my master, and tell me if your further interposition would not be dangerous to her. Oh, can you not see that it would be worse than madness?”

“What can I do?”

“Keep straight on for the north, and when once there, perhaps King John will aid you.”

For some moments Charles was silent. He saw, and was gradually compelled to confess, that Pedro spoke the truth. Circumstances placed it beyond his power to return untaken to the city of Granada, and reason overcame his blindness.

“Pedro,” he said, “I will go with you; O, God! but the cup is a bitter one. Zehra! Zehra! would I could save thee, even at the risk of life; but Heaven knows I cannot!”

The esquire moved close to his master and gazed kindly into his face.

“Sir Charles, there are those in Leon who love you.”

“Peace, good Pedro. You know nothing of what I suf-

fer. But move on. If we go we had better make all haste."

"So we will; and perhaps we may find horses ere long."

Twice Charles of Leon hesitated as though he would have turned back, but at length he nerved himself to the task, and with quick steps but a heavy heart he kept up by the side of his attendant.

"Sir Charles," said Pedro as they entered the wood, "do you know I think Abdalla had something to do with your capture?"

"Ah!" uttered the knight, starting with interest at the sound of that name.

"Yes. Some one must have told of our movements, else how could such a party have been turned out at once after us?"

"The alcalde had plenty of men ready at his bidding, and he might have detected Zehra's escape in time to have given pursuit as he did."

"I can't think so," persisted Pedro. "That Moor is a curious man."

"So he is, Pedro; but he's safe in prison now."

"Eh? In prison?"

"Yes."

"Did you see him there?"

"Yes. The jailor allowed him to come into my apartment; and he talked very strangely about affairs, too."

"What did he say? What did he tell you?" asked Pedro.

"His whole thoughts were upon Zehra."

"But would he tell you nothing himself?"

"No. He only spoke of Zehra; and he said that in her fate he had a deep interest. He said, too, that his fate and my own might centre in her."

"San Dominic!"

"I doubt whether he be a Moor."

"A Moor!" cried Pedro, stopping short beneath the weight of thought that had possessed him.

"I think he is not," repeated Charles.

"When did he say he was imprisoned?"

"On the very night he met us in the street. Or, before morning, at least."

"San Dominic!"

"What think you, Pedro?"

"San Dominic, my master, Abdalla is a strange man, but yet, I think, a Moor."

"But do you suspect anything?"

The night wind played with the thick foliage, and the words that Pedro spoke in reply were borne away upon its bosom, but the knight of Leon caught them, and he gazed into Pedro's face in wonder. His own mind ran back into the history of the past, and he thought carefully upon what he had heard. An exclamation burst from his lips, and once more he moved on; but it was a long time before he spoke to his esquire again.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLOW.

THE heavy lamps that hung in the great Court of Lions—the most magnificent apartment of the Alhambra—were half lighted, and at the head of the hall stood the Moslem king. He was patting his daintily slippered foot nervously upon the pavement, and ever and anon his left hand would settle with a sort of convulsive grasp upon his dagger-hilt. Against one of the massive marble lions leaned Ben Hamed. A look of anxiety was upon his features, and he

watched the movements of the monarch with more than ordinary interest. Several of the royal attendants were standing about the place, and they, too, looked anxiously upon the king.

"Ah, Ben Hamed," said Mohammed, "I think your fair daughter likes this Christian knight."

"By Allah! the dog needs to die!"

"He must die," ventured Ben Hamed, in an insinuating tone. "Would you have borne such insult from a Moor?"

"No!"

"He has slain three of our knights."

"He *shall* die!"

"And soon, too," added the alcalde, with a look of triumph.

"Ay," returned the king.

"Why not to-night?" Ben Hamed asked, moving nearer to the king and speaking in a trembling tone.

Mohammed strode half way down the hall and back again.

"Ben Hamed," he said, stopping near the alcalde, "you have some end to answer to this."

"Only such as may benefit you, sire. Allah knows I owe thee much."

"In truth you do."

"And by this will I in part make the payment."

"By what?"

"By urging the necessity of destroying the Christian."

"I have said once—he dies!"

"Thy judgment is just."

"But I will have his head as a present for my bride if she prove restive."

"A Christian's head will keep, sire."

“How long will it keep, think you, Ben Hamed, ere it will begin to go back to its native dust?”

“If taken off to-night it will keep till long after your nuptials.”

“Think ye so?”

“Most surely.”

“I have a mind to try the experiment.”

The king had been speaking in a half-unconscious mood, his thoughts seeming to wander about other matters, but as the last sentence fell from his lips he aroused himself and gazed fixedly at the alcalde.

“By Allah,” he continued, “I have a mind to try it!”

Ben Hamed could not conceal his satisfaction.

“Our laws make it death for the Christian who shall force away one of our people,” said the king, half to himself. “Charles of Leon knew this, and yet he would snatch away my bride. Allah! The Christian’s time has come. Husam Ben Abbas, go you to the prison and bid Tarik to take off the head of his Christian prisoner. Let it be done at once.”

“I go, sire,” returned a Moslem knight, who started up from one of the pedestals.

“Hold, Husam. Stay you and see the work performed—then bring me word.”

Ben Abbas bowed assent and withdrew.

“Now, Ben Hamed,” continued the monarch, “the Christian’s business is settled. On the day after to-morrow Zehra takes up her home here.”

“She is ready, sire.”

“And is she reconciled?”

“She will be.”

“She had better.”

“Yet, sire, it would be well not to let her know at present of the Christian’s death.”

“Ha!”

“Not that she bears him any love, sire; but you know the nature of one like her. 'Twould move her to misery to see a beast suffer. There is no need that she should know of this, at least for the present.”

“Well, well; I have no desire to annoy her.”

As the king thus spoke he commenced to pace the hall. Ben Hamed was too lame to walk easily, so he stood and watched his monarch. All that he at present desired seemed to be accomplished, and his satisfaction manifested itself upon his countenance.

Half an hour had passed away, when Husam Ben Abbas returned.

“You're soon back, Ben Abbas,” said the king. “Tarik has been quick with his work. Upon my faith, Husam, does it affect you to see a man die?”

“I've seen no one die, sire.”

“Ah! so you took Tarik's word for it, I suppose?”

“There was no one to kill.”

“No one to kill! I said the Christian! I meant Charles of Leon!”

“Surely, sire; but Charles of Leon is not there.”

“Not there! Did Tarik tell thee so?”

“He did.”

“Then he lies! The Christian dog is there. Go back and bid the jailor that he produce him.”

“Sire, the prisoner has escaped.”

“Escaped!” echoed the king, springing forward and seizing Ben Abbas by the arm. “Now, by the holy Prophet, lie not to me! Escaped, say you?”

“Yes, sire. I went with Tarik to the Christian's dungeon, but no Christian was there. The iron bar of the window had been cut off and the prisoner was gone.”

The king let go his hold upon Husam's arm and started back aghast.

"Gone!" he uttered. "Then he must have had help."

"So he may have had. Tarik let an old dervish into the prison, and he thinks he may have done the mischief."

"Go, Ben Abbas, and tell Tarik that his own life shall be the forfeit if the prisoner comes not back," shouted Mohammed, as he strode nervously across the hall. "Ben Hamed, hasten you and look to your daughter. By the powers of Heaven, the dog shall not escape me! He must have fled to the north. Mahmoud, off with thee to the Alcanaza, and have the signals ready for earliest daylight. Let the signals be made for Jaen and El Ajo that no traveler be allowed to pass from the south. Hold! How far reach our signals now?"

"To our northern frontier," returned he whom the king had called Mahmoud.

"Then thou shalt take charge of the signals. O, Allah, give me back my prisoner. Let him be once more in my power and he lives not to escape again. Ho, there! Where are my officers?"

At this bidding a number of attendants stepped forward from the marble statues and pillars.

"To horse at once!" shouted Mohammed. "Call up the guard and set off. Stop at the prison and obtain from Tarik a description of the dervish, and then for the north. Spare not your beasts. Off, now. Let not a man on the road escape your attention."

The officers withdrew and the king had thought himself alone, when his eye fell upon a female who stood against one of the pillars near him.

"Who is there?"

"Your wife."

"Emina?"

"Yes."

"And what seek ye?"

"My husband."

"Then, now that you have found me, you can retire."

"Not so fast, my lord," returned Emina, moving a step toward the king. "I have come to speak with thee. I have come once more to beg of thee that thou wilt have compassion on me. Mohammed, thou wilt not take to thy bosom another wife to take precedence of me."

"Go seek thine own apartments, Emina, and leave me to myself."

"Answer me, Mohammed. I know the Christian has escaped, and that you will try to recapture him. Of that you can do as you please; but, O, let me warn you not to move farther in your designs respecting Ben Hamed's daughter."

"What! would you threaten me?"

"No, my lord. Only would I warn thee. There's danger you cannot see. Give o'er this work, let Zehra alone, and all shall be well with you."

"Get thee gone! Away, Emina, else it shall not be well with thee."

"O, Mohammed, I implore thee."

"Out! I say!"

"Not until you have answered me."

"Zehra shall be as I have chosen, and that, too, ere two more suns have rolled over us."

"Then the worst be thine."

The king was maddened, and springing quickly forward, he struck Emina upon the cheek.

"There! Now get thee gone!" he gasped.

Emina started back as she received the blow, and she turned as pale as the marble that was grouped about her.

She did not speak, but with a step that was as firm as iron she turned from the king's presence.

"Fool!" murmured Mohammed; and when the woman's form had disappeared he sought his own couch. He did not think *he* was a fool!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SIGNAL AND THE MESSENGER.

It was nearly daylight when Charles of Leon and his esquire reached the small hill where the former had been captured by the Moors. The east was already streaked with glowing red, and the stars were beginning to fade from sight. They reached the small wood at the foot of the hill and here they stopped.

"Now throw off your wig and beard and cast away that robe," said Pedro, "for should those come after us who would trace our steps, such marks would surely betray us."

"I had thought of that myself," returned the knight. "O, if I only had my good sword."

"Never mind; we have stout daggers, and we may find swords on the road."

"Perhaps so; but horses come first," said Charles, as he threw off his robe.

"We may find them at Xejal. That is not over a league from here and there we will obtain food and rest."

"And even there we cannot remain long."

"No. We must not make a stop of any length this side of Saint Lorenzo. Courage, my master; we will obtain horses at Xejal, and then we are safe."

Charles of Leon hid the disguise he had taken off, and his appearance was now a puzzling one to define. His dress

was half way between the Christian and Moor, while his face, which still retained the skillfully applied paint that Pedro had put on, looked Moorish enough, though as the daylight became stronger the esquire removed some of the wrinkles, so that the face might be in better keeping with the rest of the man.

“At Xejal we may find a little wine,” said Pedro, as they again started on. “That will revive us.”

“By my faith, we both need reviving,” returned Charles. “But I am not so faint yet but that I can keep the road, should there be danger near.”

“So with me,” said Pedro; “and I fear that we are not yet clear of danger.”

“Let it come, Pedro. I fear no danger. By heavens, I am not done with the Moslem yet.”

Pedro made no reply to this last remark; but a dubious look rested upon his countenance, as he gazed into his master's face.

The sun was well up when the travelers reached Xejal. The place was but a small hamlet, situated in a quiet vale, and containing some twenty dwellings. There was a small inn not far from the road, and thither the Christians bent their steps. The keeper of the place was a lean, lank Moor, but yet good-natured in his looks, and as the travelers entered he bustled about with an accommodating air.

Pedro asked for refreshments, and the Moor showed them to a small apartment in the end of the building, and ere long such things as the place afforded were set before them.

“Selim,” said Pedro—for he had heard one of the inmates address the landlord thus—“can you not afford us a little wine?”

“Wine!” uttered the keeper, raising his hand in holy

horror. "The Prophet defend me. Are ye good Mussulmen, and yet ask me for wine?"

"We are good Mussulmen, but we are weary, and we ask wine only for medication. Think not hard of us, good Selim, for Allah knows we abhor the infidel beverage."

"I am a good Moslem," said Selim.

"We know it," returned Pedro, "for even in Jaen they speak of you as one upon whom every virtue rests with honor."

"Do they?" cried the Moor, while a flash of gratification lit up his swarthy features.

"In truth they do."

"And are you from Jaen?"

"Yes; and going to El Ajo. I tell thee, good Selim, I shall speak well of thee to travelers. This bread of thine is excellent."

Pedro worked hard upon the bread of which he spoke, and one could almost have fancied that he spoke the truth.

"We would have paid a high price for a bit of wine," continued the esquire, as he sipped the washy, sherbet-like drink that had been set before him; "but we must do without it, I suppose."

The Moor walked to the window and looked out. He played a few moments with the lattice-work, and then turned toward his guests.

"Ah," he uttered, with a comical attempt to appear as though a sudden thought had struck him, "now I remember me that some time since I set away in my cellar some juice which I myself pressed from the grapes. It may not have become strong yet. I will get it, and you shall see if it be proper beverage."

Selim left the room, and ere long returned with a stone bottle.

"Ah, that is sweet and innocent," exclaimed Pedro, as he placed the bottle to his lips.

"I am glad," returned the Moor; and as he thus spoke he again withdrew.

"San Dominic, Sir Charles, how old should you say that wine was?" uttered Pedro, as he poured some out into his master's cup.

"By my faith, but it's good," said the knight.

"The Moor must have been a very small boy when he bottled it," added Pedro, as he smacked his lips.

"So he must," returned Charles, "and he must have stolen a French vintage, too."

Pedro laughed over the wine, which sparkled merrily after its long confinement, and beneath its exhilarating influence he almost forgot that such a thing as danger existed.

"If we can but find horses as strong as is this wine, we need have nothing to fear," said Charles, as he pushed the bottle from him.

"We will see," returned Pedro. "Suppose I go out and see Selim? He may have some himself. I look more plainly the Moor than you do, and I shall not be so easily detected."

"You are right there, Pedro. Go at once, for we had better not remain long here."

The esquire started off to seek the landlord, and Charles of Leon began to pace the apartment. He was miserable when left alone to his own reflections, for he could think only of Zehra, and of the misery she might be doomed to suffer. Bitter disappointment had made his love more fervent, and the fire burned within him with an almost consuming power. The large dark eyes of the maiden he loved were constantly before him, and he could fancy the tears that flowed from them. One with less religious trust

would have cursed the fate that hung over his way ; but the Christian knight only bowed in anguish, and longed for the time when he might meet the Moslem in fair combat.

While the knight's thoughts were thus engaged, he heard a horse come galloping up to the door of the inn. He went to the window, in hopes that it might be Pedro who had returned successful ; but he was disappointed, for the new comer was only a Moorish traveler.

Shortly afterward Pedro re-entered the apartment. He looked flustered and uneasy.

“ Can you obtain horses ? ” asked Charles.

“ I have found some that will answer ; but they may do us no good after all.”

“ Ah ! Are they poor ? ”

“ No, no—not that,” quickly returned Pedro, casting a hurried glance about him. “ We are detected ! ”

“ Detected ! ” repeated Charles, with sudden alarm.

“ Not here, but we shall be. You heard that horse galloping up a moment ago.”

“ Yes.”

“ He has come from the height of El Ajo. Signals have been made from Granada for the stoppage of all travelers, and of course we shall not be allowed to proceed.”

“ But they think we come from Jaen.”

“ That's nothing. The messenger asked if there were any travelers here, and Selim told him of us.”

“ And did he say he should stop us in our journey ? ”

“ Yes.”

Charles gazed a moment upon the floor.

“ Pedro,” he asked, “ what men are there about the house ? ”

“ Some half dozen loungers besides the landlord and messenger.”

"Where are the horses you have seen that we could have had?"

"They are in the small stable back of the house."

"Are the bridles handy?"

"Yes."

"Then stand by me, Pedro, and we will make our way through the small number that will oppose us. Ere long a host will be down from Granada. Come, our daggers will serve us."

"San Jago, I'll stand by you, my master."

"Then lead the way to the stable."

The two passed out from the apartment and entered a narrow hall that ran through to the back yard. At the stable they found Selim and the messenger, together with five of the people who belonged to the hamlet.

"Are our horses ready?" asked Charles.

"No," hesitatingly returned Selim.

"Then let them be so at once. I will pay you your charge."

"You will have to remain here for the present," said the messenger.

"Ah! How so?" uttered Charles, gazing upon the speaker, who was an oldish man, and armed with a cimenter.

"We have received orders from Granada to allow no one to pass."

"That order must have been meant for some one who has escaped justice, and not for us. Let us have our horses, good Selim, for we are in much haste."

"No, no," interposed the messenger. "The orders are from the king and they are imperative. Officers will arrive ere long from Granada, and if they are satisfied, then you can pass."

"What have I to do with your officers?" exclaimed the knight. "Selim, lead forth your horses."

"I cannot," returned the landlord.

A moment Charles of Leon gazed about him. None of those present were armed excepting the messenger. Near him stood a long, oaken club, which seemed to have been used for beating grain. Charles seized it and then turned to his esquire.

"Pedro," he said, "lead out the best horse you can find, and he who dares molest you falls on the spot."

Pedro knew his master too well to hesitate and he moved toward the stall.

"Shall I take one for you?" he asked.

"I will look out for myself. Be quick about it."

"If you attempt to resist the king's authority the worst be your own," uttered the messenger, at the same time drawing the cimeter.

"I have studied the cost, and shall abide by my judgment," returned Charles of Leon, grasping his heavy club with a firmer hold.

"For heaven's sake, gentlemen, let there be no blood shed here!" cried the landlord, who trembled from hand to foot.

"Ho! all of you: I call upon you in the king's name to assist me," shouted the messenger. "Back from that horse! back, I say, or you shall rue it."

The last sentence was addressed to Pedro, but he noticed it not. He had backed a horse from the low stall, and had taken down a light saddle and thrown it across the animal's back. His hand was upon a bridle that hung near when the messenger spoke, and he threw it at once over the horse's head.

"Back yourself!" exclaimed Charles, as he raised the club above his head. "We go from this place at our own will, and woe be to you if you interfere."

"Now by the Prophet you have gone far enough. You

dare not touch a royal officer in the discharge of his duty. Leave that horse."

A curl of decision broke about the lips of the Christian knight.

"Mark me," he said, "I but protect myself. To do that I have often dared even death. I can dare it again!"

"For heaven's sake, gentlemen," urged the poor publican.

"Come on and aid me," cried the messenger, turning to the Moors behind him, some of whom had armed themselves with clubs, and seemed ready to show fight; "in the name of the king I bid you come."

"And in the name of the Christian's God, I bid you stand back!" shouted Charles of Leon, swinging his weapon above his head.

"Ha! you are a Christian, then?"

"Yes."

"Then you are the very men——"

The messenger's sentence was not concluded, for as he spoke he moved toward Pedro, and one blow from the knight's club brought him to the ground.

Those villagers who had collected around had no interest in the present business, and they shrank back from the presence of the Christian. None cared to come within the reach of his club, and now that the officer had fallen, they seemed inclined to offer no further resistance.

"Mount! mount!" cried Charles, as Pedro led the horse from the stable.

"But you, Sir Charles."

"The Moor's horse will do for me."

"Allah defend me!" ejaculated Selim, clasping his hands in agony. "Oh, the king will blame me. Good

gentlemen Christians, do let me entreat you to stop. You must not go. The king will——”

“Peace, Selim, broke in Charles, as he drew a small purse from his bosom. “Here’s gold enough to pay thee for thy horse, and for thy good wine, too.”

“No, no—you had no wine, good sirs.”

“Thy juice of grapes, then. Here, take the purse, and tell the messenger, when he finds his senses—if such a fortune should ever be his—that ere long his horse shall be set upon the road with his face turned homeward.”

“By Allah !” cried one of the bystanders, “that’s the very Christain knight that beat down the alcalde in the lists.”

This exclamation produced a marked sensation in the crowd. Two of the Moors who had moved forward as if to offer some further resistance, dropped their clubs and shrank back again. The Christian knight looked almost terrific in his wrath, and those around could not fail to read a death warrant in his countenance for the first who should oppose him.

Pedro had mounted the horse he had chosen and rode out into the yard. Charles sprang to the side of the fallen messenger and seized the bright cimeter, and also possessed himself of the scabbard. The owner moved heavily and opened his eyes, but before he could speak the Christian had gone. The Moor’s horse stood by the inn door, and with a single bound Charles of Leon vaulted to the saddle and drew the rein. Pedro was by his side in an instant, and together they started off.

Selim cried after them to come back, and some of the others seemed half ashamed of the inaction they had shown ; but it was now too late ; and just as the Christian disappeared the messenger came to himself only to find himself worse off than before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEATH DUNGEON.

CHARLES OF LEON found himself in possession of a good horse, but it was ere long evident that the beast had been hardly ridden of late, for he labored hard in travel. The horse that Pedro had taken was not of the best quality, although probably the best one that could have been obtained of Selim.

"San Dominic, my master," uttered Pedro, as he applied the whip to the side of his beast, "it is well we have no pursuers very near our heels."

"True; but yet we are likely to have," returned the knight.

"I would give much to know at what time our escape was discovered," said the esquire. "If not until this morning, we may yet be safe, for that messenger is of course from El Ajo, and him we have cut off. There is, I think, another signal station of Jaen, but from there we shall have no trouble."

"Perhaps my absence was discovered last night."

"If that is the case we may look for trouble. San Jago, Sir Charles, we must have better horses."

"We must make the most of these for the present. Don't spare the lash."

"I'll not spare it, but my horse don't notice it much. He's used to it, I should judge."

The Christains had now entered a tract of country that had few inhabitants, and there was no such thing as turning from the beaten road. To Charles it was evident that a

long race would be his only means of escape should he be now pursued, and he expressed the opinion to his esquire.

"True," returned Pedro, "for there's no turnout till we cross the Guadalquivir, and that is several leagues ahead. It will be near noon before we can reach it at all events."

Nearly two hours had elapsed since the two left Xejal. At the foot of a long steep hill they allowed their horses to come into a walk, and leisurely they made their way up. At the top they instinctively turned their gaze back, and they could plainly see the little hamlet they had left, snuggled cozily in its quiet vale, but most of the road between them and the village was hidden from sight by its devious way through the wood.

"I hear no sound," said Charles, as they stopped to listen.

"No—we are safe yet, let's push on."

"Hark! Was that a bird, or the thumping of some swinging limb?"

"'Twas nothing," said Pedro.

"It certainly was," insisted Charles, at the same time bending his ear attentively toward the way he had come.

"I distinctly heard a noise."

"Let's not wait here to decide. If it means evil for us we shall discover it soon enough."

"Hark! There it is again. Don't you hear it, Pedro?"

"San Dominic, I do; and it is the gallop of a horse, too."

"More than one horse," uttered Charles, as he drew his rein. "Let's on again."

"On it is," shouted Pedro, laying the lash upon the shoulders of his beast.

For some distance ahead there was a gradual descent in

the road, and though the horses rode hard yet they were kept at their utmost speed—a speed, however, that was far from satisfactory. Not over two miles had been gained from the top of the hill when the tramp of pursuing horses was plainly heard, and at length, from a point that commanded a view of the road for nearly a mile back, Charles caught a glimpse of some dozen horsemen coming after him at full gallop.

“We are lost again,” said Pedro, as his eye caught the scene.

“Unless we take to the woods,” remarked Charles.

“We cannot go in with the horses. They would not work their way at all with riders on.”

“But we can take to the wood on foot, Pedro.”

“San Jago, we can make the trial, and we can be but taken, at all events; though I think the chances are against us.”

“Ah, that hope is gone. See there. There opens the plan toward Jaen. We must ride as far as possible and trust to chance. We cannot fight them.”

Charles and his esquire galloped on, but they knew the pursurers were rapidly approaching.

“My master,” said Pedro, while a look of unwonted determination rested upon his countenance, “for once I am going to be rash.”

“Ah, Pedro.”

“Yes. If we are taken by these infidel Moors, we shall most assuredly be put to death. We can die here.”

Charles of Leon made no reply for several moments.

“What think you, my master?” asked Pedro.

“If I had my armor, or even a shield, I would face them; but I am almost unarmed. This cimeter is nothing for me, and you have nothing but a dagger. How can we fight them?”

"We cannot, I own."

"So it appears to me. We have made our trial, Pedro, and I fear we have failed; yet I will fight, if you say so."

"No, Sir Charles—it can do us no good, and may do us harm. If you are willing to be carried back to Granada, I can surely go with you."

"We must be carried back."

"Then so be it," uttered Pedro.

Charles could not have told to his esquire all the thoughts and feelings that actuated him. His heart was the home of strange emotions. He thought of Zehra, and he thought he should once more be near her; and then he thought of Abdalla and his strange words, and though he still held some vague doubts respecting the Moor, yet he looked upon the brighter side of the picture.

The human heart is a strange thing. The gentle god of love can enter there and make new the work of years; and while the tiny deity of the bow and quiver holds rule there, questions of mighty import are sometimes decided with a blindness that would seem madness in a brute, even. Love, once seated in the heart, becomes a queer judge, and pending questions turn in their decision upon points unknown to all other courts.

Now, under any other circumstances in the world, Charles of Leon would not for a moment have thought of placing any hope or trust in Abdalla; for had even the strange thought whispered by Pedro been true, the Moor had no power to aid even himself, much less any one else. Yet the Christian allowed Cupid to deliver judgment, and he tried to feel satisfied with the verdict.

The Christians had now reached an open country, and upon looking back they plainly saw that they could have gained nothing by taking to the woods. Their pursuers

were almost upon them, and as Charles saw that some of the Moors were armed with spears, he knew at once that resistance would be nothing less than suicide.

"We may as well stop, Pedro."

"It is hard, but I suppose it must be done."

"If we don't stop now we may get a taste of the Moors' javelins, and that would be by no means desirable."

Just as the knight ceased speaking the Moorish leader shouted for the Christians to stop, and of course the call was obeyed. It was Husam Ben Abbas who led the pursuers, and Charles recognized him as the knight who had taken part in the tournament at Granada, and who had been worsted by the alcalde.

"Art thou Charles of Leon?" asked Ben Abbas, as he rode up.

"I am."

"You are most wonderfully altered."

"Because I have been disguised."

"I understand. Now, Charles of Leon, in the king's name, I command thee to yield thyself a prisoner."

"And in the king's name, I refuse."

"Ah!"

"Hold, Ben Abbas. Thou art a brave knight, and I yield myself to thee, but not to Mohammed. You see I cannot resist you."

"You resist the messenger."

"Ah—and I might have resisted you had I hopes of victory."

"I believe you," returned Ben Abbas, with a smile.

"But if you yield to me, of course you will return with me to Granada without farther trouble."

"If such be your wish," said Charles.

"And how is it with your companion? I have orders for him, too, for he is suspected of having——"

"Gone into your prison, and stole away your king's prisoner," interrupted Pedro. "You are right there, and I will assure you I will keep my master company now."

"Ben Abbas," said Charles, some time after they had turned back toward Granada, "what, think you, means the king by thus—"

"Hold, Sir Charles," exclaimed Ben Abbas, with a quick shudder; "ask me no questions on that point."

"Do not fear to tell me all you know," hesitated the Christian, "for I shall not fear to hear it."

"Then you can guess the truth."

"Perhaps so. I should guess that the king meant to put me to death."

"Charles of Leon, you have spoken the truth!"

The Christian started, and a cold shudder ran through his frame; but soon he became calm again.

"Mohammed had better count the cost ere he does that deed," he said.

"He seldom stops for that," returned Ben Abbas. "He has done things more fearful than such a deed would be."

The subject was dropped, and nothing more was said till the party arrived at Xejal. Here they found the messenger sitting at the door of the inn, with a big bandage about his head. He came out and shook his fist in Charles' face and Charles knocked him down. When he got upon his feet again he claimed redress of his injuries from Ben Abbas; but Ben Abbas told him to mind his business, and not meddle with quiet prisoners. Then the good Mussulman swore terribly, and made use of some heavy threats, but as no one seemed inclined to take his part he moved back to his seat with an extra pain in his head.

Ben Abbas remained long enough in Xejal to rest the horses, and then, having exchanged the messenger's beast for one belonging to Selim, he started on. Little was said

on the way, for Charles felt more and more depressed in spirits the nearer he came to his journey's end. It was evident that Ben Abbas sympathized with him, though it was not in his power to aid him. He sympathized with him because he knew him to be a true and good knight, and because he had overcome the braggart alcalde.

It was night when the party reached Granada, and the prisoners were at once conveyed to the prison. A beam of joy lit up the countenance of Tarik as he saw the Christian returned, for his own life was saved.

Charles and Pedro were both conveyed to one dungeon. It was one from which there was no means of escape, the light coming in by only one small hole, not over six inches square at the top of the wall. They were both securely chained, in opposite corners of the dungeon, and their daggers were taken from them.

"You abused my kindness, Christian," said Tarik, after he had seen all secure.

"Hold," exclaimed Charles. "You may strike me, but do not tell me that."

"I tell you but the truth. I was kind and indulgent, but you abused it."

"No, no. Look at yourself, Tarik. Suppose you were in a foreign prison, and under sentence of death from a remorseless tyrant. You have a mother at home—a gentle sister, and a brother; what would you do when some kind but unexpected chance threw open your dungeon door!"

"I would go out."

"So did I."

"Well—I can forgive you; but you will be safe now."

"Hold, Tarik. Let me ask you one question. Is Abdalla in the prison?"

"Yes, and chained as securely as you are," replied Tarik.

Charles would have asked more, but Tarik turned away. There were two doors to the dungeon—the inner one of iron, and the outer one, which closed over its mate, being of riveted oak. These the jailor closed and bolted, and the prisoners were left in total darkness.

“We are in for it,” said Pedro, as he rattled his heavy irons.

“Yes,” fell from the lips of the knight in a heavy tone.

“Where do you think we are?” asked Pedro.

“In a Moorish prison.”

“More than that,” said the esquire, with a strange meaning in his tone. “Did you notice the place while the jailor was here with the light?”

“Only that it was strong.”

“What?” uttered the knight, earnestly, for the tone of Pedro was portentous.

“Did you see the floor of the dungeon?”

“I noticed another ring at the corner on my right.”

“So did I.”

“It is for securing prisoners,” said Charles.

“Not exactly,” returned Pedro.

“What then?”

“It affords a hold for lifting the stone to which it is affixed.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, my master.”

“Your eyes are keen, Pedro.”

“That’s because I use them.”

“Then what think you of the trap-door you discovered?”

“I think it is a prison-grave!”

“A what?” cried Charles.

“It is the place to which there is one entrance, but never

a return ! The floor of our dungeon is covered with blood ! ”

“ Good God ! ” ejaculated the knight, whose chains shook with the emotion that moved him, “ what mean you ? ”

“ Simply that we are in the dungeon where those are put to death whom the king never wishes to see again. ”

“ Perhaps, Pedro, we were put here from necessity. ”

“ And yet there must be room enough in the prison without bringing us here. ”

“ That may be, too. ”

“ Pedro—perhaps we have come here to die. ”

“ That is more likely to be. ”

“ God have mercy on us ! ”

“ Amen ! ”

CHAPTER XIX.

A FEMALE ALCHEMIST.

“ SAFE ? Safe, did you say Ben Abbas ? ” shouted the Granadan king, springing from his seat as Husam entered his presence.

“ Yes, sire—and in the prison. ”

“ Are they in the death-dungeon ? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Then there let them be. O, I’ve sat up late to-night, but this makes me wink at late hours. It makes the very noon of night like day. Did the Christian resist you, Ben Abbas ? ”

“ No, sire. He yielded at once. ”

“ Then he was stopped before you found him. ”

“ No. He had passed Xejal, and I overtook him upon the road. ”

"Then he must have had an early start, to have passed Xejal before the signals reached there."

"He did not, sire; but the messenger was alone, and the Christian escaped him."

"Never mind; he is safe now. You saw him in the dungeon, you say."

"Yes."

"Then he shall die the death! The dog sees the sun no more. By the Prophet he is mine now, and no power can avert from him his doom. There is another, too, that I must look after."

Husam Ben Abbas looked his master in the face with an earnest gaze.

"They shall die together."

"Be careful, sire," said Ben Abbas, in a low, meaning tone. "'Tis an easy thing to shed blood, but some blood may not be shed without a fearful cost."

"Cost! Do not talk to me of cost! To me, who am king of Granada! Out upon you for a prating coward! By the Moslem Paradise, that man shall die—the Christian——"

"There are two Christians, sire."

"Both of them shall die, and so shall the other. There shall be three deaths at once."

"Are you fixed upon this, sire?"

"Fixed upon it? Ay—as the Nevada is fixed upon our realm. Dost think I fear to do it?"

"No, no, sire. I know you have no fear; but there may be consequences you wot not of."

"Get thee to thy rest, Ben Abbas. There—say no more, but go. Tarik shall have his work to do full soon."

Ben Abbas obeyed his monarch without further remark.

"By Allah!" exclaimed Mohammed, as soon as he was alone, "do they think I will fear to take the life of whom

I please! No. I'll see them dead, and then I shall rest the easier. What ho! Slaves!"

Half a dozen attendants sprang into the king's presence.

"Go set the guard, and tell them the king has retired. In faith, I feel strangely sleepy."

The slaves bowed in token of obedience, and shortly afterward Mohammed sought his sleeping room.

While the king is preparing for his couch, let us look after the neglected Emina. She was in her own apartment, and she sat upon a low ottoman engaged in reading some curious Arabic characters that were traced upon a piece of parchment. She seemed to have studied long upon them, and at length she folded up the scroll and placed it in her bosom.

"To-morrow," she murmured, as she arose to her feet and placed her hand upon her brow, "he takes Zehra to the palace. O, why should he do this thing? But I have warned him, and he heeded it not. Courage Emina—courage! The fault is his own, and not yours. Yet, yet, O, Mohammed, I could almost forgive the blow you gave me, would you but turn to me once more. They tell me the Prophet has made woman to be the servant of man. That may be true—for even now, I would serve Mohammed most faithfully; but when they tell me that Allah made woman to be a mere slave, I know they lie. If a wise God had so intended, he would not have made woman with such a heart as mine. If it had been intended by God that woman should be a mere bauble of fancy, to be worn and cast off at pleasure, why were we not made with souls fitted for such a sphere? O! they lie to me when they tell me that woman's sphere is eternal servitude, and I'll prove it to them, too.—Mohammed, you have cast me off, and you have struck me! You shall not gain your end, though.

"To-morrow Zehra comes, and then they think poor

Emina will live on the favors of the past, and rest quietly beneath the injuries of the present. They do not know me truly who say or think so."

For some moments after Emina had done speaking she stood in a thoughtful mood. A variety of expressions passed over her countenance, but at length her features settled into that marble look which we have seen there before, and the eyes beamed with that deep, intense fire which speaks with feelings that the eyes alone can tell. The thin lips sometimes moved, but no sound came forth.

When Emina arose from her meditative posture, she went to a small case that stood upon her dressing-stand, and took therefrom a small phial and a number of metallic boxes. Then she sat herself down upon her carpeted floor, and drawing the lamp near to her side, she arranged her boxes. From one which was larger than the others she took a small, brazen, cup-like spoon, and into this she poured the liquid that was in the phial. Then she held the vessel over the blaze of the lamp, and as soon as the liquid began to heat, the operator commenced putting into it very small quantities of the powders contained in the boxes.

Soon the mixture began to simmer and send forth little streams of vapor. Emina watched the mess with a careful eye and ever and anon she would drop into her tiny dish a minute particle from one of the boxes. The vapor had been first of a whitish color—then it turned nearly black, but with a quick movement, and an exclamation of disappointment, another drop of powder was added, and the color was changed to a bright yellow.

"If it fail me now," she uttered, as she watched the vapor with straining eyes, "I shall trust my skill no more. White, black, yellow—And yellow still."

Another mite of powder was carefully dropped into the spoon-like dish, and the woman's eyes beamed with hope

as the vapor began to darken. In a moment the vapory column was of a green color, and with a murmur of satisfaction Emina quickly moved the dish away from the lamp. The mixture thus prepared was poured into the phial, and then the remainder of the things were put back from whence they were taken.

“Now, if Mohammed drank the beverage I prepared for him he will sleep soundly to-night,” Emina murmured to herself as she closed the case after she had returned the boxes. “Perhaps he missed it. Ah, had I been sure of his getting it, I might have made that more powerful ; but it is better as it is. Now aid me, kind Prophet, and I shall not fail.”

As Emina spoke she placed the phial in her bosom, and took her lamp. She slipped the light shoes from her feet, and then opening a small side door, she passed through into a narrow passage. It was a passage the king had often traversed in his visits to the apartment of his once favorite wife, and that wife knew it well. She moved carefully along ; several doors she opened and passed, and at length she came to one at which she stopped. She bent her ear to the key-hole and listened. A deep, heavy snoring fell upon her ear, and a ray of satisfaction passed over her features. She set down her lamp and took a key from her girdle, which she applied to the lock. The lock moved without noise, and slowly, carefully she pushed open the door.

In a moment more Emina had crawled into the apartment of the king. The guards were in the passage that opened from the other part of the room, and the sleeping monarch was alone with his discarded wife !

The woman assured herself that Mohammed slept soundly and then she crawled back and pulled her lamp into the room. As soon as this was done she crawled back to the

bed, and slowly arose to her feet. She looked like a ghost standing there by the bed of the unconscious monarch, for her face was as white as the pure linen she wore. Once the king moved heavily in his rest, and the name of *Zehra* fell from his lips, but he did not wake. A troubled, unquiet sleep held the monarch, and he seemed to be under the influence of some dream that sent various shades flitting across his stern countenance.

Emina had settled down as she noticed the first movement, but when that name fell upon her ear she started as though she had felt a shock of lightning.

“O, Mohammed!” she half murmured, as she gazed into his dimly revealed features, “would to Allah you had never heard that name; but it is too late now. The alcalde’s daughter has found that truant heart of thine when she sought it not. You love her as you once loved me. O, madness!”

Emina looked for a moment longer upon the king, and then she drew the phial from her bosom. She took out the stopper, and then gathering the edge of the sheet in her hand she let fall upon it several drops of the liquid she had prepared. That part of the linen upon which the liquid had fallen was placed carefully over the sleeping man’s mouth, and then Emina let a drop fall upon his upper lip, just under the edge of the nostril. After this was done she sought Mohammed’s kerchief, and upon this she put some of the preparation.

The woman placed the phial back into her bosom, and for several moments she stood and gazed upon the sleeper. A look of sadness stole over her features as she gazed, and a tear trembled upon her long, dark lashes. She felt the drop as it fell upon her hand, and quickly starting from her position she wiped away the tell-tale tear, and turned toward the door. She took up the lamp and carefully closed

the door, and having turned the key and taken it out from the lock, she stealthily glided back to her own apartment.

One of the guards at the outer passage thought he heard a noise, and he opened the door and looked in; but the king was sleeping soundly, and all was quiet. The soldier wondered that Mohammed slept so soundly, but he did nothing more than wonder, and when he reclosed the door and resumed his station outside, he thought all was safe.

And Mohammed,—he dreamed not of the visitor he had had, but he dreamed of the beautiful Zehra !

CHAPTER XX.

THE POOR DECEIVED.

IT was toward noon of the day succeeding the events last recorded. Ben Hamed was in his own dwelling engaged in examining some papers that related to the affairs of justice that came under his official supervision. It was certainly not easy for him to fasten his mind on the business he had in hand, for ever and anon he would push the documents from him, and start to his feet as if other matters usurped his thoughts. Ben Hamed was far from being a happy man. It is not certain that his conscience troubled him much; but he knew that he was playing false cards to every one about him, and he could not but fear that detection might, sooner or later, overtake him. Detection from the king would surely cost him his office, and detection from any one else would fasten upon him a shame that he could not overcome. He knew that he was hated by most of the knights of Granada, and though his arm was strong in battle yet his heart was weak in honor.

Again and again did the alcalde seat himself to his

official task, but no sooner did he begin to reason upon the matters before him than his brain became confused, and he was obliged to give over the trial; so he folded up their outer blankness.

Thus Ben Hamed sat, when the door of his apartment was opened. It was Husam Ben Abbas who entered.

"Ben Hamed, I bear thee a message from the king," said Husam.

"I listen."

"Mohammed awaits the coming of your daughter, and he desires that you will haste to bring her."

"Husam, in what mood seems the king this morning?"

"As usual, save, perhaps, that he is more testy."

"Testy? I think he should be different from that. The Christian is in his power, and Zehra is soon to be his."

"Nevertheless he is out of sorts this morning, and I, for one, was glad to get clear of his presence."

Ben Hamed looked troubled.

"What ails him?" he asked.

"In truth I know not."

"Has he seen the Christian knight since his re-capture?"

"No, nor will he be likely to."

"Ah—Charles of Leon has not again escaped."

"No; but he is soon to die."

"Good," uttered the alcalde. He was unable to conceal his gratification.

"It's very easy to say 'good,'" returned Ben Abbas, in a meaning tone, "but all is not good that sounds so. If I am not much mistaken, there is a counter current to the affairs about us, and the waters may not run so smoothly as you think."

"I do not understand you, Husam."

"I mean that Mohammed is playing at a game too high for him. 'Tis well enough to trap a hawk, and even a child may do it, but that child must beware when he thinks to kill his game."

The alcalde started, and gazed earnestly at his visitor.

"Do you understand me, Ben Hamed?"

"Not quite."

"Then you must wait. But for the present you had better hasten to the king with your fair daughter. He is anxious for her presence. Ah, Ben Hamed, you are paying a good round price for your office."

"Ben Abbas!"

"Oh, take it not unkindly, for I mean what I say. Of course the eternal peace of the gentle being you would sacrifice is nothing more than meat for the kingly favor you get in return!"

"Now, by Allah, Ben Abbas, if you mean to beard me with taunts, you shall answer for it," cried the alcalde, starting with passion.

"Look ye, Ben Hamed," returned Husam, his whole countenance beaming with pride as he spoke, "you can call these things taunts if you choose, but let me tell thee that every honest knight in Granada abominates the act you have bound yourself to perform. Zehra is the fairest maid in our city, and we like not that she should be sacrificed to Mohammed."

"You shall answer for this."

"So I will. Go carry your daughter to the king first, and then you may seek me if you choose. Mohammed waits to snuff the fragrance of the fair flower you have plucked for him."

As Ben Abbas spoke, he turned away and left the alcalde to himself.

"By the holy Prophet, they shall not beard me thus,"

Ben Hamed exclaimed as he was left alone. "They shall yet find that my arm has not weakened."

For some moments the alcalde paced up and down his apartment in an endeavor to calm the passions that had been aroused in his soul. He knew not exactly what Ben Abbas meant by the hints he had thrown out, but yet they had much influence on his mind. He knew that he was staking his all for the king's favor, and should he lose that he would have no friend toward whom he could turn. However, he at length contrived to quiet himself upon the hope that Mohammed would be true to him, and in this mood he went to seek his daughter.

He found the fair girl in her apartment.

"Zehra," he said, with as much kindness of tone as he could command, "you must prepare to accompany me to the Alhambra. The king has sent for you, and he is anxious for your coming." The effect was like a palsy shock to the poor girl. She sank back upon the couch and covered her face with her hands.

"Come, Zehra—cheer up."

"Oh, is there no escape from this?"

"Escape? What mean you? Did you not promise me that you would go calmly and quietly?"

"Perhaps I did, but oh, I thought not of the pangs I was to suffer. The poor prisoner in his dungeon may think calmly of the stake and the fire, but when the flames that are to consume him begin to crackle in his ears, his heart may quail. Oh, save me from this."

"Come, come, Zehra; you have ere this exhausted my patience. Beware how you trifle with me more."

The maiden remained for some time with her hand upon her brow, and at length she arose to her feet. There were no tears in her eyes, for whatever of grief and anguish she may have felt was too keen, too deep for tears. She was

pale, and the muscles about her mouth were still and quiet. She had passions at work, but they were like the hidden fires of the earth that find no crater. They lived upon the soul wherein they raged.

“I will go,” she said, in a voice too calm to be usual.

“Then make your preparations, and I will call for you.”

“One question, Ben Hamed. Where is Charles of Leon?”

“In the prison.”

“And will he be released when I am once at the palace?”

“Yes.”

“You do not deceive me now?”

“Why should I?”

“You spoke with a strange accent.”

“Did I?”

“Yes.”

“Then it was because your question was a strange one.”

“Ben Hamed, you know that I make this sacrifice, because you have told me it would save the life of the young Christian.”

“And suppose it would not save his life?”

“Then I would not make it.”

The alcalde thought of speaking harshly, but his better judgment prevailed. He would not have Zehra appear before the king with her eyes swollen with tears, and so he dropped the subject and withdrew.

In less than an hour the fair maiden was prepared for her departure from the home of her youth, and she had two female servants to attend her.

“You look exceedingly beautiful,” said Ben Hamed, as he led her from her chamber. “The king will be overjoyed.”

“At my misery?”

"Hush, Zehra. At your beauty, I meant."

"And when that fades!"

"It will not fade. You are young, and your beauty will outlive the king."

"Oh, what a hope for a pure soul is that!" murmured Zehra. "That her beauty may outlast her husband's life! Say no more to me, if you would have me calm."

Ben Hamed obeyed the girl's injunction, and without further remark he led her to the palanquin which was waiting to convey her to her destination. As Zehra stepped into the gaudily arrayed vehicle, a low groan escaped her lips, but Ben Hamed did not hear it. The silken curtains were drawn, and then the maiden was borne away toward the Alhambra.

When her bearers reached the royal residence she was lifted out by the alcalde, and messengers from the king were waiting to conduct her to the apartments that had been assigned for her use, while Ben Hamed went to report himself to his monarch.

When Zehra entered the room that was to be hers she was for the moment dazzled by the magnificence of things about her, but the reality of her situation soon came upon her, and she sank into her own gloomy reflections. She was left alone with the two attendants that had accompanied her, and as soon as they had seen their young mistress relieved of her traveling robe they retired to the adjoining apartment where they were to find their own quarters.

Hardly had the servants disappeared, when a small door, which had been hidden by a heavy silken arras, was opened, and Emina glided into the apartment.

"—sh!" uttered the new comer, as she gazed quickly about the room. "So you have come to the palace."

"They have brought me."

"I had thought you would not have been brought," said Emina in startling accents.

"Oh, I have come to save the life of one I love! Did you ever love?"

"Yes—almost madly."

"Then you know my secret."

"But who is to be saved? and how?"

"Charles of Leon."

"Who told thee that?"

"Ben Hamed told me so. He said if I would come quietly to the king, the Christian should go free; but if I refused, he should die."

"Oh, curses, curses on them! Zehra, they have lied most foully to thee!"

"Mercy!"

"—sh! We shall be heard."

"Oh, tell me, have I been deceived? Is Charles of Leon to die?"

"Yes. The king has set this very night for the deed."

"Impossible! Oh, monstrous! It cannot be!"

"It is as I have said."

"But to save him I will sacrifice my happiness forever. I will embrace the king though his very breath breathed deadly poison!"

Emina started with a wild look as those words fell from Zehra's lips, and for a moment she gazed into the maiden's face as though she would have drawn forth more words than had been uttered; but soon her features grew calm again, and with a most strange meaning she said:

"Few can *breathe deadly poison and live*."

"Then I could die to save the Christian. Oh, go tell the king that I will be all he can ask, if he will but spare the life of Charles of Leon."

"It cannot be done. They have deceived you. It was a trap to entangle you."

"Oh, misery!"

"Will you be the king's now?"

"What! and Charles of Leon dead?"

"Yes."

"No! I have a fairer husband who shall woo and wed me. I have another to whom I will give my heart!"

As Zehra spoke she half drew a small dagger from her bosom.

"——sh!" uttered Emina. "Some one approaches. Use not your dagger hastily. Let it rest where it is."

The king's wife glided back through the small doorway just as Ben Hamed entered from another direction. He had come to speak flattering words to Zehra, but she turned from him in disgust. She knew that he was black with falsehood, and that his breath was hot with foul deceit.

She did not tell Ben Hamed what she had just learned, but she begged of him to leave her to herself. He wondered at her course, but she gave him no clue to its cause, and at length he left, remarking, as he turned away, that when he came again the king would accompany him.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEATH-WARRANT—PEDRO AT WORK.

THE day was drawing to its close, and Mohammed was seated upon a large purple cushion in one of his audience chambers. Ben Hamed was there, and at a short distance stood Husam Ben Abbas. There were a number more of attendants present, and all seemed hanging with more than

wonted anxiety upon the words which were about to fall from the king's lips.

"Husam Ben Abbas," said the king, "approach me."

The noble went nearer the king.

"Ben Abbas, you do not bow so low as was your wont."

"Ah, sire."

"I speak the truth, Husam. You do not look me so kindly in the face as you have done."

"It may be that matters of great import show themselves upon my features, sire."

"Hark ye, Ben Abbas. Beware that rebellion finds no home in thy bosom, or, by Allah, you'll repent it."

"You know me, sire, and you know I have been faithful."

"Then why those peevish looks?"

"I am sad and heart-sick."

"Ah, and by heaven, I, too, am heart-sick. All this day I felt a knawing at my very vitals. I tell thee, Ben Abbas, I feel most strangely."

Ben Abbas turned away his head to hide a look he could not suppress. The name of Emina dwelt silently on his lips and a look of joy passed over his features.

"My head, too, feels wonderfully uneasy," continued the king. "But I shall overcome it."

"I trust you may, sire," said Ben Abbas.

"Ay! Allah protect thee!" added the alcalde.

"But enough of this," uttered Mohammed, showing by his manner that he was ill at ease. "Ben Abbas, I have made up my mind."

"Allah grant that you may be merciful!" said Husam.

"Merciful!" repeated the king, with a bitter laugh.

"Let mercy be for those who need it. I want none of it. Husam, *Abdalla must die!*"

Those present started at the words.

“Have you thought of this, sire?” asked Ben Abbas.
“Have you thought of what might be the consequences of such——”

“Silence!” cried Mohammed. “I have thought of nothing save what I should do, and upon that I have determined. Abdalla must die ere another sun shall rise!”

“You certainly have the power to do as you please,” said Ben Abbas, in a low tone of voice.

“Ay, and none shall prate of my doings, after the deed is done. Mark that, Husam, and beware. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sire.”

“Then I shall look for you to be wise.”

“I am wise now, Mohammed,” proudly returned Ben Abbas; “and from my wisdom I would speak to thee. Thou must not wonder that I speak plainly, for it is the province of a true friend so to speak. Ah, sire, those are enemies who look blindly on our faults, and flatter us in our evil.”

“Go on, Ben Abbas, for your speech has a smacking of honesty, though I must say that it is not always wise to be honest.”

“I have but a word more to say. I advise you not to lay the hands of death upon Abdalla; and it will be for your interest to let the Christians go free from Granada.”

“You have spoken, and I suppose, honestly,” said the king with a sneer.

“I have, in truth, sire.”

“Then let me tell thee that I need not thy advice. I’ll talk with thee another time, Ben Abbas, but it waxes late now, and I must to business. Ah! that pain at my heart. I have overtaken myself with thought; and yet that feeling is a strange one.”

The monarch pressed his hands upon his bosom as he spoke, and as the pain seemed to pass off he raised his head,

and reached forth for a bit of parchment that lay near him.

“Mahmoud,” he said, addressing an officer who stood near him, “take this to the prison and deliver it to Tarik. Therein he is commanded to put to instant death the two Christians who are confined there. Then his other prisoner is to follow. He will—”

Mohammed stopped and pressed his hand again upon his bosom. A slight groan escaped him, and then he resumed :

“Bid Tarik that he obey my order. Let Abdalla die close upon the death of the Christians ; and let it all be done quickly, too.”

“Sire !” interposed Ben Abbas.

“Silence !” exclaimed Mohammed. “By Allah, if you speak another word, you too shall visit the prison. Men shall know who is king of Granada, if they think to rule me with their prating ! Go, Mahmoud.”

Husam Ben Abbas bowed his head, and with a low murmur upon his lips he turned away from the royal presence. There was much pain in his look, and he trembled violently as he walked toward the door.

“Come back, Husam,” cried the king. “By my faith, there is rebellion in thy very look, and I’ll not trust thee from the palace till Mahmoud has performed his mission.”

If Ben Abbas had thought of intercepting the king’s messenger, he was prevented now, and he folded his arms across his breast as Mahmoud left the hall.

Let us, while the messenger is on his way, look into the prison, and that we may the better understand things that transpired, we will go back a few hours and take our view by daylight.

In one of the strongest dungeons, but one to which considerable light was admitted, sat Abdalla. He was firmly chained, but yet he had good scope for exercise. He now sat

upon the stone which served him for a seat, and his face was bowed toward the floor. His hands were clasped together, and his lips moved with a sort of half-uttered prayer. He was calm, but yet sorrow and suffering were traced on every lineament of his countenance. He seemed as one who looked hourly for death, and who had made up his mind to meet the king of terrors calmly. There might have been some rays of hope in his countenance, but they were so dim as not to be easily distinguished.

In the lower dungeon, where last we saw him, sat Charles of Leon and his esquire. The former seemed to have been not long aroused from slumber. The aperture at the top of the wall admitted light enough to enable the inmates to distinguish objects plainly about them, and Charles had discovered all that Pedro had previously spoken of. The deep stains of blood were all over the floor, the apparatus was there for binding prisoners for the death-stroke, and the trap-door, too, was easily distinguished.

"My master," said Pedro, "you have enjoyed a good long sleep."

"Ay, and by my soul, Pedro, I had a wonderfully pleasant dream for such a place of sleep as this."

"That may be a good omen, for I sometimes believe in dreams."

"Especially when they are pleasant ones, I suppose."

"Nay, not so, my master. I wouldn't refuse to believe in a right pleasant dream, but my good old mother always learned me particularly to believe in all bad ones; and, if I mistake not, she had a wretched ending for all the good ones."

"That would be hard, Pedro."

"So it would; but while you have been dreaming, Sir Charles, I have been at work. Look at that!"

As Pedro spoke, he arose from his seat and walked freely across the dungeon.

"What means that, Pedro?" uttered the knight in astonishment.

"Simply that they didn't discover my case of instruments. I have them all here, and you see how they have served me."

"But there can be no such thing as escape, even if we get rid of our irons," said Charles.

"There can be no such thing as escape with our irons," returned Pedro; "so let's have them off, and then we shall be ready for the first chance. And let me tell you one more thing; we are put here to die—there is no doubt about that. Now if we have our irons free we may use them to advantage. Not more than one man can enter our dungeon at a time, and we can sell our lives dearly, at all events. But there may be a chance of escape. Suppose we are visited by night; we can knock down the keeper, and perhaps make our way out."

"I understand you, Pedro," said Charles, with a slight tinge of hope in his tone.

"Then you must take this saw and clear my hands. I worked upon my feet very easily, but you see I cannot work around my wrists. Separate these bolts, and then I'll have you free in a twinkling."

The knight took the keen instrument from the hands of his esquire, and ere long the bolts that held the manacles upon Pedro's hands were cut off, and the faithful fellow was at liberty so far as his irons were concerned.

"Now, my good master, hold you still a few moments and your limbs shall be relieved of those ugly trimmings."

As the squire thus spoke he knelt down and commenced operations. His tongue kept pace with his hands; and if the humble follower had not so much of the lion bravery in

his composition as his master, he had at least more of shrewdness and cunning, and far more of patience under difficulties.

"There," uttered Pedro, as his master was clear from his shackles, "now we are ready for visitors. Suppose, for the curiosity of the thing, we raise this trap door."

Charles agreed to the proposal, and both of the men laid their hands to the task. The ring affixed to the slab was a large one, and there was plenty of room for both of them to obtain a hold.

Slowly the heavy stone slab was raised from its place. The Christians bent over the place, but they started quickly back. They had gazed only into a dark abyss from which came forth a cold, noisome stench almost overpowering. It was the malaria of decaying human flesh.

"Down, down with the door again!" uttered Charles. "By heavens, we shall die with the poisonous vapor."

"It's a strange place," murmured Pedro, as he helped his master replace the slab. "I saw such a one at Cordova; and I saw human beings thrown into it, too. San Dominic, but there's a time of trial coming."

Charles made no answer to Pedro's remark, but gazed upon the stone he had lifted. There was a cold shudder run through his frame, but when it passed away his hands were clutched with a nervous power, and the name of God trembled upon his lips.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GAME OF CHESS—THE CHRISTIAN'S DUNGEON.

NIGHT had closed over the Granadan prison. Abdalla was in his dungeon pacing to and fro at such distances as his chain would allow, and as the sharp clanking of the

links fell upon his ear he seemed studying out wild music from their notes. While he was thus engaged, Tarik entered the dungeon, bearing beneath his arm a chess board.

"Do you feel like a game of chess, this evening?" asked the jailor, as he sat his lamp down.

"Yes, good Tarik. Anything to drink up the dull moments that hang about me."

"Then I'll spend an hour with thee. Everything is quiet about the prison, the prisoners all safe and the guard set."

As Tarik spoke he moved a cushion up to where Abdalla stood, and having set the lamp down in a convenient place, he unshackled the prisoner's right hand, and then seated himself.

Abdalla did the same, and having placed the chess board upon their knees, they arranged their men.

"Tarik," said the prisoner, "something tells me that this may be the last game we shall ever play together."

"No, no; we will play often."

"I think not. The king will not keep me much longer."

"He will not dare to—"

"—sh. He will dare to do what he pleases. But never mind that now. You shall move first, and I will beat you."

"Not so easily. There."

"That's your old move."

"Yes, and I mean it for victory. By Allah, if you were playing for your life I should hardly let you beat me this time."

"I tell thee, Tarik, whatever I shall play for shall be mine. Life is not mine to stake."

They played, and they played, too, as men who understood the game. The minutes slipped rapidly away, and yet the two chess-players moved their pieces with but little

effect. The prisoner forgot his chains, and the keeper forgot his office.

"I have thee," whispered Tarik.

"Not yet," returned the prisoner, as he backed up his queen by a dexterous move.

The players were again buried in the game, when the door opened, and Mahmoud entered.

"Tarik, here is an order from the king," said the messenger, placing a bit of parchment in the keeper's hand.

Tarik opened the scroll and read. His face turned pale, and a fearful tremor shook his frame.

"I am to wait," said Mahmoud.

"Then I will join thee below," returned Tarik, placing the scroll in his bosom.

"What ails thee?" asked the prisoner, as the messenger withdrew.

"Only a sudden and unexpected order," replied Tarik, in a thick, husky tone, while he trembled as though the death angel were hovering over him.

"Let's finish the game."

"No, no; I cannot play more."

"If I can play, why should not *you*?" asked the prisoner in a tone of strange calmness. "I feel that I have more interest in the king's message than you have."

The two men continued the game, but Tarik played wildly.

"Ah! there goes your queen, and the game is mine!" uttered Abdalla.

"Yes; you've won!" murmured Tarik, and as he spoke he turned away to wipe a tear from his cheek.

The keeper arose from his seat and set the chess-board against the wall. He replaced the manacle upon the prisoner's hand, and then taking up the lamp, he left the apartment.

"O, Allah forgive me!" he murmured, as he closed the prison. "I would rather die myself than do this deed. But I will not shed all this blood myself. *Him* I must kill with mine own hand, but the poor Christian's shall fall by another's. Ah! this is truly his last game. Prophetic vision!"

When the jailor reached his office, he called up two of his attendants. They were sinister looking, powerful fellows, and those who knew them knew them for the Granadan executioners.

"You know the place where the Christians are confined," said Tarik.

"Yes," answered one of the executioners.

"Then take your cimeters and go to their dungeon. Here is the king's order for their immediate death. Do your work well now, and be quick about it, for I would not have them suffer pain. I have further use for the place when you have done."

"And the bodies?"

"Into the pit."

The executioners took down two heavy cimeters that hung against the wall, and having taken a lamp, they departed on their fearful mission.

The Christian prisoners were seated in their respective places, and their chains were gathered about them. Utter darkness surrounded them, but they thought not of sleep.

"Hark!" uttered Pedro, "I heard a step approaching."

"So did I," returned Charles.

"What means a visit at this time?"

"We will find out if they come."

"They have stopped. Ah! there goes the bolt of the outer door."

"Yes," uttered Charles, with a quick breath. "Gather

your heavy chain for action, Pedro. By heavens! if they come to murder us they shall find our lives dear."

"I am ready," whispered Pedro. "Be sure and look to it that your feet are clear."

In a moment more the inner door of the dungeon was opened, and the rays of a lamp shone in upon the prisoners. Charles saw two men, and he saw, too, that they were both armed. He guessed the mission upon which they had come.

"What seek ye here?" the knight asked, as the man who bore the lamp sat it down at the door.

"You'd better not ask any questions," returned the foremost of the executioners.

"Back, till you tell me wherefore you are here," shouted Charles, springing to his feet and raising his hands over his left shoulder.

The man did not see how the prisoner's irons were fixed.

"Don't think of frightening us," he said, "for we have come to put an end to your sufferings. Come, put down your hands, and sit upon your bench, for you'll die easier if you do."

Charles half lowered his hands, and the executioner took a step forward; but he came no nearer, for with a full, powerful sweep the knight brought his heavy chain upon the intruder's head, and he sank upon the pavement like a dead ox. At the same moment Pedro sprang upon the second executioner, but his blow fell upon the Moor's shoulder, and with a loud cry the lamed man sprang back from the cell. The lamp was upset and extinguished in the fray, and the prisoners were left in total darkness. They heard the second executioner as he hurried away, but they knew that one lay senseless near them.

"Shall we flee?" cried Pedro.

"No, no; not yet."

"Yes, yes. The way is open. Come."

"But we shall——"

"Be killed if we stay here," broke in the esquire.
"Come, follow me."

Charles hesitated no longer, but grasping his stout irons more firmly he groped his way out from the dungeon.

"This way," said Pedro. "I noticed the way as we entered. This leads to the jailor's room, and we must fight our way through, and run."

Hardly had Pedro spoken when a torch flashed through the darkness, and a number of men at the head of whom was Tarik, were seen approaching them.

"Hold!" cried Tarik, as he came near to the prisoners.
"Back to your cell."

"Let us pass," returned Charles of Leon. "I know your purpose and will defend myself."

"One moment, sir knight."

"No; not an instant. Clear the way."

Tarik was a powerful man used to dangers, but he hesitated before the Christian.

"You must surrender," he said.

"Never while I live! Back!"

The jailor saw that words were of no more use, and he bade his followers, four in number, to assist him. He sprang forward. The knight swung his heavy chain, but it struck the wall in its descent, and as it fell powerless, short of its mark, he was seized and thrown upon the floor. Pedro made a stout resistance, but he was overcome by a superior force, and ere long the two Christians were bound and conveyed back to the cell from whence they had escaped.

"Charles of Leon," said Tarik, as the prisoners were forced down upon their seats, "Allah knows that I am

pained to do this thing. I would rather ten thousand times set you free ; but it is no will of mine."

"And do you really mean that we must die?" uttered Charles.

"Yes. So the king has ordered."

"And what have I done? What thing rests upon my head that deserves this?"

"Many have asked the same question in this very place ; but I have no answer for them. You must die."

"Tarik," said Pedro, clasping his hands together, "let me die and spare my master. O! one death is enough."

"You appeal to one who has no authority," returned the jailor.

"Then let us die," murmured Charles. "Come, Tarik, if the deed must be done, let there be haste about it."

"You will forgive me, sir knight."

"Yes."

Charles saw that resistance would no longer avail him, but only make matters worse for him, and with a calm look he awaited the stroke that was to end his life.

"Let us both die together," urged Pedro."

"That I can grant ; and would to heaven I could grant more. Charles of Leon bow your head, and the stroke shall be a smooth one."

"God forgive me for my sins !" ejaculated Charles ; and then folding his hands across his breast, he closed his eyes and bowed his head.

"What noise is that?" uttered Tarik, just as he drew his cimeter.

"What ho, there ! Tarik ! Tarik !" shouted some one from without.

The jailor started, and let his cimeter fall.

"Tarik ! Tarik !"

In a moment more Husam Ben Abbas, all covered with dust and sweat, rushed into the dungeon.

"Is there blood spilt yet?" he gasped, gazing wildly about him.

"No," returned Tarik, half stupefied.

"Not a drop?"

"No."

"Heaven be praised!" fell from the lips of Ben Abbas; and he sank senseless into the arms of the jailor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE VIRGIN BRIDE.

ZEHRA was alone in the gaudy apartment that had been prepared for her. She looked like a queen in dignity, for her soul had become the home of a purpose that lifted her above the clods of fear. Three heavy lamps were burning in their swinging frames, and their combined power gave the luster of midday to the scene. Choice and fragrant flowers were blooming in crystal vases, tiny birds were singing in their golden cages, and a silvery fountain sent up its sparkling waters from a marble basin in the center of the room. Art and nature were strangely, wonderfully combined to charm the senses, and the sensualist might almost fancy that there could be no sweeter a Heaven than this!

But all was lost upon her for whom the pleasure had been intended. She noted not the luxury of the place, nor did she appreciate the incentives that had arranged it for her. She did once bathe her feverish temples in the cool water, and at times she would listen abstractedly to the cheerful warbling of the little birds. It was getting late, and Zehra sat down upon the soft couch. She had almost lost herself

in a dreamy unconsciousness, when she was aroused by the opening of the door of her apartment. She started to her feet just as Ben Hamed entered.

"My daughter," he said, "here comes your husband. Smile, now."

But Zehra could not smile. She looked up, and she saw the king.

"You can leave us, Ben Hamed," said Mohammed.

The alcalde cast one imploring and half threatening glance at Zehra, and then left the apartment.

The maiden was alone with the man who had wrenched from her all that could make life worth living for.

"By Allah, sweet Zehra, but you look exceedingly beautiful!" exclaimed the king as he sat down upon the couch.

The maiden made no reply.

"Come and sit thee by me."

"I would rather stand in the presence of the king," returned Zehra.

"But the king is now your husband."

Zehra trembled, but her features were still calm.

"Come, sweet Zehra."

"I am unworthy to approach my king."

As the maiden spoke she thought she saw the silken arras at the end of the apartment move, and also thought she saw a burning eye peeping forth from behind its folds, but she gave it no attention.

"Ay, fair maiden, I shall think your coyness takes color for your will. Come, dearest, and sit thee by my side. I have felt quite ill this evening, but your radiant beauty revives me. Come."

Zehra moved not.

"By Allah, maiden, this smacks of stubbornness. Now I command thee to come. O!"

Mohammed suddenly pressed his hand upon his bosom, and a pain-mark rested upon his features.

“What! Will you not obey me? Then I will try another means.”

“Hold, sire!” uttered Zehra, as the king started to his feet. “Touch me not!”

“Ah! How is this?” exclaimed Mohammed, showing by his manner, that the maiden’s conduct was as unexpected as it was strange.

“Approach me not, sire.”

“What mean you? By the beard of the Prophet, but you act your part curiously. Are you not mine?”

“No!”

“Ah! Now I see thee as thou art. But such beauty as yours is only fit for a king, so I needs must have thee.”

“Another step, and this dagger shall find my heart!” pronounced Zehra, as she drew the bright weapon and raised it above her throbbing bosom.

Mohammed was for the moment awed by the appearance of the noble girl before him. She trembled not, nor did her features move, but she stood calmly before her king, and her bosom was bared for the stroke of the keen instrument of death.

“Put up that weapon, Zehra. This is some sudden freak of madness. Your father told me that you came freely.”

“I came by force, and even then I was deceived. I was told that if I would make sacrifice of my peace in becoming your wife, Charles of Leon should live.”

“Ah!” uttered the king, while his frame shook with rage. “And do your affections still run there? Then, I too, have been deceived; but it matters not with you. I take not a wife at her own whim, so come to me at once.”

“Beware, king! Lay not a hand upon me. I loathe you, and I have made my choice between you and death.

For me the grave offers more rest to the soul than does your embrace."

"But hold, Zehra," said the king, with a sudden change in his tone and manner. "Suppose I would send thee back to thy father. When I sent for thee I thought thou wast——"

Zehra knew not the king's intent. As he spoke she let the point of her dagger fall, and on the instant Mohammed sprang forward and caught her arm.

"Now I'll see how the love of a king shall be treated," he exclaimed, as he gazed exulting into the maiden's face. "Ah, you are mine—mine—mine."

Zehra struggled, but the king caught the dagger and cast it away. He turned again to gaze into the beautiful features of the maiden he so much coveted, but the expression of his countenance suddenly changed, and instinctively he carried his right hand to his bosom.

Mohammed's left hand was fixed like the grip of a vice upon Zehra's arm, and she uttered a cry of pain as the fingers sank into her flesh.

"O! O!" groaned the monarch.

Zehra thought it was rage that made him look so strangely; but the expression of his countenance soon became dreadful to look upon. He gasped for breath, and gradually his hold upon the maiden's arm loosened.

"O, torture!" gasped Mohammed, as he carried both his hands to his heart. "Zehra! Zehra!"

The maiden started back aghast. She was terrified by the fearful look of the king. His countenance was turning to an ashy paleness, and his eyes were rolling wildly in their sockets.

"Zehra! Zehra!" he gasped, "you are mine! mine! The fiends shall not snatch you from me. What ho, there! Ben Hamed! Mahmoud! Husam Ben Abbas! Where

are ye all? Off! off! Tarik! Tarik! see that your prisoner dies! Ha! ha! ha! Abdalla must die! He shall die! Where are my attendants? Ben Abbas, where art thou?"

Wilder and more wild grew the frenzy of the king. His gaze at length fell upon Zehra and he sprang toward her. With a low cry she eluded his grasp; he took a step beyond her; tottered a moment, and then fell heavily, upon the marble floor! Zehra uttered a shriek of alarm, and while its tones still rang wildly through the perfumed air of the apartment the silken arras was thrown aside and Emina glided into the room. She approached the spot where lay the king and kneeled over him.

"Mohammed is dead!" she said.

"Dead!" cried Zehra, starting forward.

"Yes. O, Mohammed! Mohammed! This is the end of the race; the goal of thine unfaithfulness! I told thee thou shouldst never take another to thy bosom. Hadst thou been true I could have died for thee; but when thou didst prove untrue, death was for thee alone. O, how few there be who know the human heart!"

Emina arose to her feet and gazed into the wondering face of Zehra.

"You are free," she murmured, "and so is the king!"

"O, this is dreadful!" murmured the maiden.

"But not so dreadful as it might have been had Mohammed lived," said Emina. "Stop not to gaze here, but go."

Ere long the cry was echoed through the Alhambra—"The king is dead!" The passages leading to the royal apartments were thronged, and soon Husam Ben Abbas came rushing into the chamber.

"Dead! dead! Is he dead?" he cried.

Emina silently pointed to the stiff body. Ben Abbas bent over it and placed his hand upon the marble brow.

"Great heavens!" he uttered, "death may not yet have done its work!"

"Yes it has," said Emina.

"Here—here—it has; but I meant *at the prison*! O, for the wings of a falcon now!"

Madly did Husam Ben Abbas dash from the death-chamber. All who were in his way were overturned as he hastened to stay the sword of the executioner. Hope lent him her speed, and with every nerve and muscle strained to their utmost he flew away on his self-taken mission.

"He spoke of saving some one, did he not?" tremblingly whispered Zehra, grasping Emina by the arm.

"Yes."

"Did he mean Charles of Leon!"

"He meant any whom the king had doomed. The Christian may yet be saved."

"O, Heaven bless him if he succeeds!"

"Come, Zehra," said Emina, as she looked once more upon the form of the king, which the attendants had raised to the couch, "let us away from here."

Emina took the maiden by the hand as she spoke, and led her away.

The old physician came and gazed upon the corpse of the king. Ben Hamed accompanied him.

The alcalde asked what had caused the catastrophe. The physician shook his head.

"I fear it was the bursting of his own passionate heart. The fit was on him to-day."

Thus spoke the physician, and those who stood around believed him. They dreamed not of that neglected wife who had saved a fair maiden from the foul grasp of a sensual monarch.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION

THE sun had again risen over the city of Granada, and the light of day once more peeped through the chink-like hole in the dungeon of the Christians. They had for the time been spared from the cimeter, but their chains had been replaced, and Pedro's case of tools had been taken from him. An attendant had brought them food and drink in the early morning, but he would answer no questions, only shaking his head in mysterious silence.

The forenoon passed away, and yet the prisoners were left to themselves. They spoke to each other, and wondered what was to be done with them. They knew not the message which Husam Ben Abbas had brought the night before. They only knew that the fainting messenger had been conveyed from the dungeon, and that shortly afterward they had been re-chained in their former positions. Noon had passed, when the door of their dungeon [was opened, and Tarik entered.

"How now, Tarik?" asked Charles, as he saw that the jailor bore in his hands a hammer and wrench.

"You must accompany me to the Alhambra."

"Ah; and what is that for?"

"I know not, only that I am ordered to conduct you thither."

"And Pedro?"

"He will accompany you."

Tarik proceeded to take the irons from the feet and hands of his prisoner, and when the work was accomplished, he

bade them follow him. Charles hesitated not to obey, for there was something in the manner of the jailor that gave him a strange hope. When they reached the keeping-room, Tarik pointed the Christians to a small closet.

“In there you will find water and napkins,” said he, “and also some of the clothing which you left behind you when you made your unceremonious exit from my keeping.”

Charles and Pedro entered the closet, and when they came forth they were conducted away toward the Alhamhra.

The great Court of Lions was a scene of magic grandeur. The great fountain in the center was sending forth its towers of diamond sparkling water, and even the massive marble lions that lay crouched upon its basin, seemed endowed with life. Richly-dressed knights were collected about the numerous pillars, and busy messengers were hastening to and fro. Into the midst of this scene were Charles of Leon and his esquire ushered.

“Ah, sir Christian,” uttered Husam Ben Abbas, stepping quickly forward as he noticed the entrance of the prisoners, “you are waited for.”

“And wherefore?” asked Charles, gazing about him in a state of utter bewilderment.

“Follow me, and see.”

Those who stood around made way for Ben Abbas, and as they moved aside they gazed curiously upon the Christians.

“Sire,” said Ben Abbas, stopping before the golden throne, upon the soft downy cushions of which reposed a man bearing the brilliant garb and glittering crown of the Granadan monarch, “here are the prisoners.”

“Charles of Leon.”

The Christian knight started at the tones of that voice, and gazed up at the king.

“Charles of Leon,” repeated the king, “we have called you here to know thy business in Granada.”

“Abdalla!” fell in doubting accents from the Christian’s lips.

“You recognize me, then?” said the king, with a smile.

“San Dominic!” ejaculated Pedro.

“Ah! and you, too, wonder. I remember thy good advice, Pedro, which you once gave me; it was about running after the sun when I ought to be in bed.”

“Oh, mercy!” cried Pedro.

“I forgive thee; so fear no more.”

Then turning to the knight the king continued,

“You wonder why I am here, and I suppose, too, you wonder why you have seen me in strange places before.”

“I do most assuredly,” returned Charles, gaining courage from the kind manner of the king.

“Some others here may not know all that has transpired,” said the king, as he arose from his seat and gazed proudly, happily around upon his subjects. “I am Jusef Abdalla, and Allah knows how cruel has been my fate. Years ago this throne was mine by right. Mohammed was my brother, and he foully cast me into prison and usurped my throne. Ten long years have I lain there a prisoner, while my unnatural kinsman revelled in these halls. You look wonderingly at my statement, sir Christian, but it is nevertheless true. Lately, good Tarik took pity on me, and sometimes at dead of night, and deeply disguised, he would allow me to walk forth and snuff heaven’s fresh air. He trusted to my oath that I would not betray myself. Once he let me out in the daytime. It was at the tournament. In such a crowd I was safe. Tarik ran a great risk, but while I live, and he lives, he shall never have occasion to repent of his kindness.

“I mistrusted your errand here when I met you on the

road. It was a freak of chance, surely, that you gave me the thought, but when I once entertained it, I knew enough to convince me that I was right. I was not anxious that you should carry Zehra away from Granada, for in her had my hopes of regaining my throne centered. It was a strange thought, but yet it became almost a revelation to my mind. I knew the circumstances that surrounded the usurper, and I believed he would not live long after he had taken Zehra to his palace."

The king hesitated a moment and gazed into the Christian's face. He would not betray to those about him his suspicions of the part Emina had acted, but he knew that Charles suspected as much as he did.

"However," continued Jusef, "the matter has ended as well as could have been wished, though we both of us had a narrow chance. Husam Ben Abbas took advantage of Mohammed's death, and he arrived at the prison just in season to stop the fatal work the tyrant had planted. Now, Charles of Leon, about thy mission to Granada, for you are in my power now."

Charles started and the rich blood mounted to his temples.

"You know my mission, sire," he tremblingly said, as he sank down upon his right knee.

"In truth I do, and let me give thee joyous news, too, sir Christian. The fair being you seek is yet pure as the virgin snow that glitters in the sunbeams from Nevada's crown."

"God be praised!" ejaculated the knight, in a fervent tone. "O, you will give her to me—I know you will."

"That depends upon the maiden's own choice," returned the king. "Arise, Charles of Leon, and you shall hear the answer from the lips of the fair girl herself. Husam Ben Abbas, let Zehra approach."

In a few moments three females entered the hall and came near the throne. She that was in the center stepped tremblingly to the throne and sank upon her knees.

“Arise, lady, and lay aside your veil,” said Jusef. “Fear not, for no harm hangs over thee.”

As she arose she put back the veil from her face. A murmur of admiration ran from lip to lip, as the beautiful Zehra gazed forth in all her blushing, trembling loveliness.

“Zehra,” said the king, “the Christian knight of Leon, Charles, Count of Valladolid, claims thee at our hands. Tremble not, for your fate rests in your own hands. If you would rather stay in your own sunny Granada, you shall be protected; and if you will go with the knight of Leon, you shall go as you will it.”

The maiden attempted to speak, but the words failed her. She heard her name pronounced by a well-known voice, and she turned and met the earnest, imploring gaze of her Christian lover. She forgot that the eyes of the king were upon her; she forgot that a hundred brave knights were watching her; she thought of the darkness of the past, of the fearful doom she had escaped, and while the sweet light of the new-found day broke in upon her soul, she uttered one low cry of joy, and sank into the arms of him to whom she had given her whole heart, with all its priceless love.

“Now, by Allah, there speaks an honest, truthful heart,” exclaimed the happy king, as he wiped a tear from his eye. “What man in all my kingdom can tell so plain a truth as that?”

“O, she is mine!” cried Charles, gazing up through his tears at the monarch.

“Yes, Charles of Leon.”

“Then may the choicest blessings of kind Heaven be

ever yours," the knight murmured, as he sank down upon his knee.

"Hold, sire!" cried Ben Hamed, starting forth from among the crowd of Moslem knights. "You have no right to give away my child thus!"

Charles of Leon started to his feet, and Zehra clung more closely to him.

"Ben Hamed!" pronounced the king, while his eyes flashed, and his countenance wore a terrible look, "how darest thou drag that villainous body of thine into our presence? What one thing dare you claim at our hands?"

"My child, sire," uttered the alcalde, cowering beneath the monarch's gaze.

"Out upon thee, base liar! Thou knowest well that Zehra is not thy child, and that she is not Moslem born. I was on Almanza's bloody field when you cut down the servants who bore a helpless child. One woman you saved, and with the child you bore her off. You knew that child was the daughter of Henry of Leon and Castile. You remember the bloody affray, Ben Hamed, for you led the attack while Henry was on his way from Valencia to Segovia. Though you might hide your little prisoner from others, you could not hide her from me, for I saw the deed. You know you feared to tell my royal father on your return what you had done. Zehra is the sister of King John of Leon and Castile, and knowing this, you have thought to sacrifice her to the desires of my wicked brother; and more too, you have tried to have Charles of Leon put to death because you feared he had come for her. Get thee now from my presence, and let me see you no more. I scorn to take full revenge upon you for the wrongs you did in helping me to prison while the usurper seized my throne; but beware how you throw yourself in my way again. You

are no longer an officer in Granada. Husam Ben Abbas is alcalde in your stead !”

As the king ceased speaking, the people made way for the disgraced man, and Ben Hamed shrank away like a whipped cur from the presence of those who he well knew despised him.

“Tell me, sir knight,” said the king, after Ben Hamed had gone, as he turned toward Charles of Leon, “how did John discover where his young sister was?”

“He knew not for a certainty, sire,” returned Charles. “Zehra’s mother was in Valencia when she gave birth to her child, and Henry went there, with a considerable force, to bring her home to Leon. His party was camped at Almanza, where a party of Moors set upon him. He looked in vain for his child after the affray was over ; but he found the bodies of three of the female attendants, and as the fourth was missing, he feared she had taken the child and fled. Much search was made, but all was fruitless. The old king died, and he believed he should find his child in heaven. However, a few months since, two French knights, on their way from Granada to their own country, stopped at our court. They saw the portrait of Henry’s queen, and with much astonishment they spoke of a maiden they had seen here who seemed its very counterpart. They said, too, she was too clear in her blushing whiteness for a Moorish maiden. They had only seen her at a tournament, and they knew not her name.

“This, sire, was enough to excite king John’s curiosity, and gradually the hope found a home in his bosom that he might find his sister. I was chosen to perform the mission. The rest you know. When I first saw Zehra, however, her exceeding beauty prevented me from noticing the likeness I sought, and the circumstances, too, were

strange ; but I have seen it since, and I have triumphed in my work."

"Ay," added Jusef, with a kindling eye, "and you have not triumphed alone. All that is good has triumphed, while evil hides its foul head."

As the king spoke, he stepped down from his throne, and placed one hand upon the head of the knight, and the other upon Zehra.

"There," he continued, "I can do no more for your happiness. What remains must be the work of your own king. This is the first act of my rule, and I can only pray that every future act of my life may be as just as in this. Husam Ben Abbas shall accompany you home, and other of our knights shall go with him. O, in after times, if history speaks of Jusef III., it shall, at least, tell to the world that he was a good and just king. I wish it to speak no more."

The monarch bowed his head as he spoke, and those who stood near him saw tears in his eyes.

The prayers of the Moslem king were truly answered. He had been taught by adversity, and he was a generous, noble sovereign, and Granada was never so prosperous, never so happy, as while Jusef III. ruled her destinies.

Emina lived all alone in the apartments that were hers in the Alhambra, and few knew how much she had done toward relieving Granada of the tyrant king ; but if she sometimes felt sorrow for what she had done, the increasing peace of those about her helped to soothe the wound, and in her heart she felt that she had not done much wrong.

Ben Hamed soon found that Granada was no place for him, and he soon made his way to Almeira, and from thence across into Africa.

O, what shouts of joy—so wild, so loud, so prolonged—rent the air of Valladolid ! In the royal palace all was joy and festivity. Knights and ladies were shouting, and even the servants and humble esquires were joining in the loud chorus. Perched upon a marble pedestal, by the side of an Indian statue, stood Pedro Bambino. He was swinging his cap in mad delight, while big tears of joy were coursing down his sunburned cheeks.

An aged bishop had just been performing the ceremony that made Charles of Leon and Zehra one for life. King John clasped his sister again and again to his bosom, and he blessed God for the joy he had found.

“You will not be jealous of a brother’s love, Sir Charles,” he said, as he at length resigned the blushing bride to her husband.

“No, no, sire,” the knight returned, with a beaming look. “I would have all love her ; and were she not my bride your happiness would repay me for all that I have undergone. As it is, this happiness is almost too much.”

“Then you must look to it that you make it last.”

“Ah, sire,” returned Charles, clasping Zehra to his bosom, “while this gentle being lives, my happiness cannot grow less.”

“Heaven grant it !” uttered a deep voice, and Husam Ben Abbas took Zehra by the hand. “Fair lady,” he continued, “I must leave you now. My stay has been as long as is proper. When I go to Granada what shall I tell your friends?”

The fair being looked at her brother and then upon her husband. Then she turned toward Ben Abbas, and with a voice made tremulous by joyful emotion, she said :

“Tell them that Zehra is happy. But O, Ben Abbas, you cannot tell them all the happiness I feel ! Words

cannot express it all, no more than an earthly minstrel can sing the joys of the seraphim ! ”

The Moslem raised the small white hand to his lips, a tear sparkled in his dark eye, and then he turned away, to carry the message to his own people in the south.

[THE END.]

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